CHRISTOPHER IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

The Reis Library
Allegheny College

From the Library of
Ida Minerva Tarbell '80

CHRISTOPHER
IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/christopherinhis0000john

McLELLAN

WITHDRAWN

CHRISTOPHER

IN HIS

SPORTING JACKET

BY

John Wilson

[CHRISTOPHER NORTH]

Illustrated

New York
McCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.
1901

This Edition of Christopher in his Sporting Jacket is limited to twenty-five hundred copies, for distribution in England and America.

Copyright, September, 1901, by McClure, Phillips & Co.

A LIST OF THE SUBJECTS OF THE COLORED PRINTS

I.	"CRASH GOES THE TOP-TIMBER OF THE FIVE-BARRED GATE"	FRONTISPIECE
II.	"SHE IS A SALMON, THEREFORE TO BE WOO'D—SHE IS A SALMON, THEREFORE TO BE WON"	FACING PAGE 8
III.	"UP RUNS THE TYRO READY-COCKED"	16
IV.	"WELL, THEN, AFTER CAT-KILLING COMES COURSING"	28
V.	"HARK FORWARD, TANTIVY!"	46
VI.	"WELL DONE, FRO!"	78
VII.	"WHAT A TWINKLING OF FISTS AND SHILLELAS!"	82
VIII.	"A RED-DEER—A STAG OF TEN"	128

97991

ARTIST'S NOTE

The eight etchings that illustrate this edition of Christopher in his Sporting Jacket were designed for the especial purpose by Alex. M. McLellan, who likewise colored the prints by hand. The cover design and vignette sketches in black and white are by the same artist.

INTRODUCTION

THE present reprint of *Christopher in his Sporting Jacket* which originally appeared in *Blackwood* for September, 1828, there interrupting the monthly sequence of the better known *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, and which was later included in *Christopher North's Recreations* in 1842, is the first that has ever been made in separate and appropriate form of this delightful chronicle of sporting life and exquisite idyl of natural boyhood. It has been reserved for an American publisher to rescue its three "fyttes" from the oblivion that has overtaken so much of the work of one of the

earliest and most prolific of modern magazine writers, and to rehabilitate fittingly a veritable little masterpiece, worthy, in its proper place on library shelves, to stand side by side with no less a work than the *Compleat Angler*, which it so closely resembles in its expression of a lifelong devotion to the cause of sport. There is temperamentally a greater ardor in Christopher North's enthusiasm, and there is a greater variety of interests represented in the rounds of his rural employments. Walton was all his life a single-hearted lover of the rod and reel, while North was Piscator, Venator, with many things else, all in one. But in them both there is the same sense of poetry in their enjoyment of their chosen pastimes which makes them kindred spirits of romance.

In this day of renewed interest in "pastimes pursued on flood, field and fell," and the introduction of many of them into America, there should be a peculiar place for *Christo-*

pher in his Sporting Jacket, and the present edition is prepared for the delectation of amateurs of the sports in our own land no less than for the lovers of literature who will welcome it for its fresh charm and poetic spirit.

Since *Christopher in his Sporting Jacket* is one of those pieces of literature whose interest inheres largely in the personalities of their authors, it may not here be amiss to sketch briefly the life and characteristics of a man who, whatever may be the fate of his writings, will ever remain one of the most captivatingly eccentric figures in an age not wanting in original geniuses. John Wilson, or "Christopher North," as he chose to call himself in his *Blackwood* days, was born of well-to-do parents in the manufacturing town of Paisley, in Scotland, in 1785. For his schooling he was early sent to Mearns, a country locality half hill and half dale, the scenes of which formed the setting for those early sporting adventures described in our

reprint. Of Wilson, the boy, the "Young Kit" of the *Sporting Jacket*, Mrs. Gordon, his daughter, writes in her biography: "In his childish years John Wilson was as beautiful and animated a creature as ever played in the sunshine." And he was indeed a brilliant and beautiful boy, with a touch of that ideal, Wordsworthian boyhood about him that lights up those "coarser pleasures" which he followed with such zest, with real "intimations of immortality." It is no wonder that, as he himself tells us at the end of *Christopher* at the moment of leave-taking, when at the age of twelve he was about to go to the University of Glasgow, his friends and teachers even then under the spell of the personality of one so precocious and yet so blithe and gay and high-spirited, should have predicted for him "a life that was sure to lead to honor, and riches, and a splendid name."

At eighteen, he went to Magdalen College, Oxford, where, so prominent was he as an

undergraduate, his public life may be said to have begun. His very appearance was sufficient to distinguish him from his fellows. His physical prowess manifested itself in an athletic figure, and his singularity was further heightened by his head shaggy with hair, always described in later life as leonine, and by enormous whiskers unusual then among university youth, as, indeed, among all classes at the time. He had a perfect passion for declamation and debate, which led him to espouse either side of an argument or both sides in turn with equal vigor and impartiality, and to seek out strange companies at coaching taverns to charm with his discourse. This last satisfied his whimsical turn for adventure, otherwise indulged by summer walking tours and sojourns among the gypsies, in which respect he reminds us of that later lover of the Romanies, George Borrow. He had strong sporting proclivities, not alone now for those pastimes pursued on hill and

heath, but on turf and by ring-side as well. Roped arena, cocking-main, and paddock were alike familiar to him, nor were his encounters with those of the pugilistic profession at least, purely those of patronage on his part. Indeed he was more than a match for many of the best bruisers of his time. It is related that he once got into an altercation with a pugilist unknown to him by sight who, when Wilson offered to fight him, thought to frighten the Oxonian, equally unknown, by a parade of his redoubtable name. Wilson proceeded to punish him in the most approved fashion, and his aggressor when he had sufficiently recovered could only gasp: "You can only be one of the two; you are either Jack Wilson or the Devil."

It may be thought that these predilections for rather brutalizing pastimes, taken together with the drinking feats for which he was famous, represent a certain quality of coarseness in the character of Christopher North.

But, as De Quincey says of him, these things grew out of his abundant animal spirits and the needs of a Herculean constitution and left his nature uncorrupted and undegraded. He never lost or outgrew a certain dewy freshness and pristine innocence of childhood that makes him all through his life fit to be typified by the "Young Kit" of the *Sporting Jacket*. Certainly at Oxford his rather riotous revels and madcap escapades did not prevent his winning distinction as a student. And best of all he found time for the cultivation of those literary tastes that led him to make the acquaintance of Wordsworth's poetry and to write an admirable letter to the Hermit of Rydal Mount at the time when the reputation of that poet was very much in the making.

After graduation, Wilson went to live in the Lake Country, at Elleray, there marrying and settling down to the leisurely life of a country gentleman with literary tastes. Shortly afterward, through the dishonesty of

an uncle, he lost all but the remnants of his fortune, and was forced to study for the bar, to which he was admitted in Edinburgh, in 1815. It was at this time too that his literary career began. A poem, *The City of the Plague*, attracted the favorable attention of Jeffrey, the ogre of the *Edinburgh*, and Wilson began to contribute to that magazine. But Wilson was a Tory while the *Edinburgh* was a *Whig* organ. So when Blackwood started his Tory magazine, he attached himself to the new periodical and began that long identification with its interests which lasted up to within a couple of years of his death.

This was before the era of scientific appreciation as it is practised to-day, and in criticism the cudgel was the favorite weapon of offence and defence. In critical contests conducted in this spirit Wilson was always in the forefront, wielding his quarter-staff with all the head-breaking dexterity of a smock-frocked yokel at a country fair. In reality the

sweetest, mildest mannered man that ever murdered a literary reputation,—not at all the "musty," "rusty," "fusty," "crusty" Christopher that Tennyson called him,—Wilson suffered from the reactionary effects upon his own spirit of his ferocity, and is said to have stood aghast at the unforeseen effects of the storms he helped to stir in the literary atmosphere of the Scotch capital, and of all the United Kingdom for the matter of that. He was one of those whom earlier generations were wont to arraign for the murder of Keats, but whom later critics more candid and dispassionate have acquitted of the crime. It is certain that he attacked Keats virulently, even scurrilously, but his method was less personal than peculiar to his time. Wilson lived to pass out of the storm and stress period of critical writing, and found no difficulty in accommodating his nature to less strenuous ways of life and literature. In the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, contemporary criticism

of a delicate and subtile sort is achieved with the most delicious humor through the exquisite burlesque delineations of such prominent persons as the Ettrick Shepherd and the English Opium-Eater.

In 1820 occurred the event in Wilson's life which most served to throw into strong relief his peculiar characteristics. In that year, at the age of thirty-five, he was chosen to fill the vacant chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University. Anything more unfitting at the first sight than the election of Christopher North, the sport, the reveller, the barrister, the slashing *Blackwood* critic, with no especial technical qualification for the position, can hardly be imagined. Indeed his choice was an educational scandal, and could only have been effected by the Tory influence in the Town Council that was exerted on his behalf. It seems as if Wilson's own sense of humor, which was strong, must have deterred him from acceptance.

If he did accept the chair, and with it the odium of an anomalous position in the eyes of the world, it must have been because he had a secure and instinctive sense of his own inner sufficiency for the office which raised him above the superficial lack of dignity in the conduct of his life. After all, the gravest charge of unfitness that could be brought against him, was his want of training as a systematic philosopher. How well he succeeded in spite of this deficiency, the affectionate testimony of his students sufficiently proves. He became one of those great teachers of the young, all the more potent for a touch of winning worldliness, whose amplitude of mind and character educates less by precept than by conduct. He never became the scientific pedagogue. Indeed his lectures were most irregular, and often the result of sheer improvisation. Absent-minded and unsystematic, he frequently left the subject far afield. But things of this sort made little dif-

ference to a man like Christopher North, who has only to speak to enchain the attention and exalt the spirit of the student.

Wilson was only thirty-five when he became professor. While he lived to be nearly sixty-nine, there is little more to recount of his career. His life continued from this point to follow the channels which had been marked out for him by the trend of his early activities. He resigned his professorship in 1851, and in 1852 he made his last contribution to *Blackwood.* He died in 1854.

Stevenson in *Virginibus Puerisque* compares life to the line of march of "an invading army in a barren land; the age we have reached, as the phrase goes, we but hold as an outpost, and still keep open our communications with the extreme rear at the first beginnings of the march. There is our true base; that is not only the beginning, but the perennial spring of our faculties; and Grandfather William can retire upon occasion into

the green, enchanted forest of his boyhood." It is the especial and characteristic charm of Christopher North that throughout life he retained more than most men the power of retiring into "the green, enchanted forest of his boyhood." Thomas Duncan painted *Christopher North in his Sporting Jacket* as an old man, hale, hearty, but still patriarchal. We like better his own picture of himself in our reprint as a gay, enthusiastic boy, somewhat savage in his instincts, it may be, but fine-spirited and poetic withal. For boy he never ceased to be, even after he had assumed some of the gravity proper to a professor of the Moralities. Here we still see him in spirit, as Mrs. Gordon described him in person in the day of his youth, "as beautiful and animated a creature as ever played in the sunshine."

WILLIAM ASPENWALL BRADLEY.

CHRISTOPHER
IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

I

CHRISTOPHER
IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

Fytte First

THERE is a fine and beautiful alliance between all pastimes pursued on flood, field, and fell. The principles in human nature on which they depend, are in all the same; but those principles are subject to infinite modifications and varieties, according to the difference of individual and national character. All such pastimes, whether followed merely as pastimes, or as professions, or as the immediate means of sustaining life, require sense, sagacity, and knowledge of nature and nature's laws; nor less, patience, perseverance, courage even, and bodily strength or activity, while the spirit which animates and supports them is a spirit of anxiety, doubt, fear, hope, joy, exultation, and triumph—in

the heart of the young a fierce passion—in the heart of the old a passion still, but subdued and tamed down, without, however, being much dulled or deadened, by various experience of all the mysteries of the calling, and by the gradual subsiding of all impetuous impulses in the frames of all mortal men beyond perhaps threescore, when the blackest head will be becoming grey, the most nervous knee less firmly knit, the most steely-springed instep less elastic, the keenest eye less of a far-keeker, and, above all, the most boiling heart less like a caldron or a crater—yea, the whole man subject to some dimness or decay, and, consequently, the whole duty of man like the new edition of a book, from which many passages that formed the chief glory of the *editio princeps* have been expunged—the whole character of the style corrected without being thereby improved—just like the later editions of the Pleasures of Imagination, which were written by Akenside when he was about twenty-one, and altered by him at forty—to the exclusion or destruction of many most *splendida vitia*, by which process the poem, in our humble opinion, was shorn of its brightest beams, and suffered disastrous twilight and eclipse—perplexing critics.

Now, seeing that such pastimes are in number almost infinite, and infinite the varieties of human character, pray what is there at all surprising in your

being madly fond of shooting—and your brother Tom just as foolish about fishing—and cousin Jack perfectly insane on fox-hunting—while the old gentleman your father, in spite of wind and weather, perennial gout, and annual apoplexy, goes a-coursing of the white-hipped hare on the bleak Yorkshire wolds—and uncle Ben, as if just escaped from Bedlam or St Luke's, with Dr Haslam at his heels, or with a few hundred yards' start of Dr Warburton, is seen galloping, in a Welsh wig and strange apparel, in the rear of a pack of Lilliputian beagles, all barking as if they were as mad as their master, supposed to be in chase of an invisible animal that keeps eternally doubling in field and forest—"still hoped for, never seen," and well christened by the name of Escape?

Phrenology sets the question for ever at rest. All people have thirty-three faculties. Now there are but twenty-four letters in the alphabet; yet how many languages—some six thousand we believe, each of which is susceptible of many dialects! No wonder, then, that you might as well try to count all the sands on the seashore as all the species of sportsmen.

There is, therefore, nothing to prevent any man with a large and sound development from excelling, at once, in rat-catching and deer-stalking—from being, in short, a universal genius in sports and pastimes. Heaven has made us such a man.

Yet there seems to be a natural course or progress in pastimes. We do not now speak of marbles—or knuckling down at taw—or trundling a hoop—or pall-lall—or pitch and toss—or any other of the games of the school playground. We restrict ourselves to what, somewhat inaccurately perhaps, are called field-sports. Thus Angling seems the earliest of them all in the order of nature. There the new-breeched urchin stands on the low bridge of the little bit burnie! and with crooked pin, baited with one unwrithing ring of a dead worm, and attached to a yarn-thread—for he has not yet got into hair, and is years off gut—his rod of the mere willow or hazel wand, there will he stand during all his play-hours, as forgetful of his primer as if the weary art of printing had never been invented, day after day, week after week, month after month, in mute, deep, earnest, passionate, heart-mind-and-soul-engrossing hope of some time or other catching a minnow or a beardie! A tug—a tug! With face ten times flushed and pale by turns ere you could count ten, he at last has strength, in the agitation of his fear and joy, to pull away at the monster—and there he lies in his beauty among the gowans and the greensward, for he has whapped him right over his head and far away, a fish a quarter of an ounce in weight, and, at the very least, two inches long! Off he flies, on wings of wind, to his fa-

ther, mother, and sisters, and brothers, and cousins, and all the neighbourhood, holding the fish aloft in both hands, still fearful of its escape, and, like a genuine child of corruption, his eyes brighten at the first blush of cold blood on his small fumy fingers. He carries about with him, up-stairs and down-stairs, his prey upon a plate; he will not wash his hands before dinner, for he exults in the silver scales adhering to the thumb-nail that scooped the pin out of the baggy's maw—and at night, "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined," he is overheard murmuring in his sleep—a thief, a robber, and a murderer, in his yet infant dreams!

From that hour Angling is no more a mere delightful day-dream, haunted by the dim hopes of imaginary minnows, but a reality—an art—a science—of which the flaxen-headed schoolboy feels himself to be master—a mystery in which he has been initiated; and off he goes now, all alone, in the power of successful passion, to the distant brook—brook a mile off—with fields, and hedges, and single trees, and little groves, and a huge forest of six acres between it and the house in which he is boarded or was born! There flows on the slender music of the shadowy shallows—there pours the deeper din of the birch-tree'd waterfall. The scared water-pyet flits away from stone to stone, and dipping, disappears among the airy bub-

bles, to him a new sight of joy and wonder. And oh! how sweet the scent of the broom or furze, yellowing along the braes, where leap the lambs, less happy than he, on the knolls of sunshine! His grandfather has given him a half-crown rod in two pieces—yes, his line is of hair twisted—plaited by his own soon-instructed little fingers. By Heavens, he is fishing with the fly! And the Fates, who, grim and grisly as they are painted to be by full-grown, ungrateful, lying poets, smile like angels upon the paidler in the brook, winnowing the air with their wings into western breezes, while at the very first throw the yellow trout forsakes his fastness beneath the bog-wood, and with a lazy wallop, and then a sudden plunge, and then a race like lightning, changes at once the child into the boy, and shoots through his thrilling and aching heart the ecstasy of a new life expanding in that glorious pastime, even as a rainbow on a sudden brightens up the sky. *Fortuna favet fortibus*—and with one long pull, and strong pull, and pull all together, Johnny lands a twelve-incher on the soft, smooth, silvery sand of the only bay in all the burn where such an exploit was possible, and dashing upon him like an osprey, soars up with him in his talons to the bank, breaking his line as he hurries off to a spot of safety twenty yards from the pool, and then flinging him down on a heath-surrounded plat of sheep-

nibbled verdure, lets him bounce about till he is tired, and lies gasping with unfrequent and feeble motions, bright and beautiful, and glorious with all his yellow light and crimson lustre, spotted, speckled, and starred in his scaly splendour, beneath a sun that never shone before so dazzlingly; but now the radiance of the captive creature is dimmer and obscured, for the eye of day winks and seems almost shut behind that slow-sailing mass of clouds, composed in equal parts of air, rain, and sunshine.

Springs, summers, autumns, winters—each within itself longer, by many times longer than the whole year of grown-up life, that slips at last through one's fingers like a knotless thread—pass over the curled darling's brow; and look at him now, a straight and strengthy stripling, in the savage spirit of sport, springing over rock-ledge after rock-ledge, nor heeding aught as he plashes knee-deep, or waistband-high, through river-feeding torrents, to the glorious music of his running and ringing reel, after a tongue-hooked salmon, insanely seeking with the ebb of tide, but all in vain, the white breakers of the sea. No hazel or willow wand, no half-crown rod of ash framed by village wright, is now in his practised hands, of which the very left is dexterous; but a twenty-feet rod of Phin's, all ring-rustling, and a-glitter with the preserving varnish, limber as the attenuating line itself,

and lithe to its topmost tenuity as the elephant's proboscis—the hiccory and the horn without twist, knot, or flaw—from butt to fly a faultless taper, "fine by degrees and beautifully less," the beau-ideal of a rod by the skill of cunning craftsman to the senses materialized! A fish—fat, fair, and forty! "She is a salmon, therefore to be woo'd—she is a salmon, therefore to be won"—but shy, timid, capricious, headstrong, now wrathful and now full of fear, like any other female whom the cruel artist has hooked by lip or heart, and, in spite of all her struggling, will bring to the gasp at last; and then with calm eyes behold her lying in the shade dead, or worse than dead, fast-fading, and to be re-illumined no more the lustre of her beauty, insensible to sun or shower, even the most perishable of all perishable things in a world of perishing!—But the salmon has grown sulky, and must be made to spring to the plunging stone. There, suddenly, instinct with new passion, she shoots out of the foam like a bar of silver bullion; and, relapsing into the flood, is in another moment at the very head of the waterfall! Give her the butt—give her the butt—or she is gone for ever with the thunder into ten fathom deep!—Now comes the trial of your tackle—and when was Phin ever known to fail at the edge of cliff or cataract? Her snout is southwards—right up the middle of the main current of the hill-born river, as if she would

McLELLAN

seek its very course where she was spawned! She still swims swift, and strong, and deep—and the line goes steady, boys, steady—stiff and steady as a Tory in the roar of Opposition. There is yet an hour's play in her dorsal fin—danger in the flap of her tail—and yet may her silver shoulder shatter the gut against a rock. Why, the river was yesterday in spate, and she is fresh run from the sea. All the lesser waterfalls are now level with the flood, and she meets with no impediment or obstruction—the course is clear—no tree-roots here—no floating branches—for during the night they have all been swept down to the salt loch. *In medio tutissimas ibis*—ay, now you feel she begins to fail—the butt tells now every time you deliver your right. What! another mad leap! yet another sullen plunge! She seems absolutely to have discovered, or rather to be an impersonation of, the Perpetual Motion. Stand back out of the way, you son of a sea-cook!—you in the tattered blue breeches, with the tail of your shirt hanging out. Who the devil sent you all here, ye vagabonds?—Ha! Watty Ritchie, my man, is that you? God bless your honest laughing phiz! What, Watty, would you think of a Fish like that about Peebles? Tam Grieve never gruppit sae heavy a ane since first he belanged to the Council.—Curse that colley! Ay! well done, Watty! Stone him to Stobbo. Confound these stirks—if that white one,

with caving horns, kicking heels, and straight-up tail, come bellowing by between us and the river, then, "Madam! all is lost, except honour!" If we lose this Fish at six o'clock, then suicide at seven. Our will is made—ten thousand to the Foundling—ditto to the Thames Tunnel——ha—ha—my Beauty! Methinks we could fain and fond kiss thy silver side, languidly lying afloat on the foam as if all further resistance now were vain, and gracefully thou wert surrendering thyself to death! No faith in female—she trusts to the last trial of her tail—sweetly workest thou, O Reel of Reels! and on thy smooth axle spinning sleep'st, even, as Milton describes her, like our own worthy planet. Scrope—Bainbridge—Maule—princes among Anglers—oh! that you were here! Where the devil is Sir Humphrey? At his retort? By mysterious sympathy—far off at his own Trows, the Kerss feels that we are killing the noblest Fish whose back ever rippled the surface of deep or shallow in the Tweed. Tom Purdy stands like a seer, entranced in glorious vision, beside turreted Abbotsford. Shade of Sandy Govan! Alas! alas! Poor Sandy—why on thy pale face that melancholy smile!—Peter! The Gaff! The Gaff! Into the eddy she sails, sick and slow, and almost with a swirl—whitening as she nears the sand —there she has it—struck right into the shoulder, fairer than that of Juno, Diana, Minerva, or Venus

—and lies at last in all her glorious length and breadth of beaming beauty, fit prey for giant or demigod angling before the Flood!

> "*The child is father of the man,*
> *And I would wish my days to be*
> *Bound each to each by natural piety!*"

So much for the Angler. The Shooter, again, he begins with his pipe-gun, formed of the last year's growth of a branch of the plane-tree—the beautiful dark-green-leaved and fragrant-flowered plane-tree —that stands straight in stem and round in head, visible and audible too from afar the bee-resounding umbrage, alike on stormy sea-coast and in sheltered inland vale, still loving the roof of the fisherman's or peasant's cottage.

Then comes, perhaps, the city pop-gun, in shape like a very musket, such as soldiers bear—a Christmas present from parent, once a colonel of volunteers —nor feeble to discharge the pea-bullet or barley-shot, formidable to face and eyes; nor yet unfelt, at six paces, by hinder-end of playmate, scornfully yet fearfully exposed. But the shooter soon tires of such ineffectual trigger—and his soul, as well as his hair, is set on fire by that extraordinary compound—Gunpowder. He begins with burning off his eyebrows on the King's birthday; squibs and crackers follow, and

all the pleasures of the pluff. But he soon longs to let off a gun—"and follow to the field some warlike lord"—in hopes of being allowed to discharge one of the double-barrels, after Ponto has made his last point, and the half-hidden chimneys of home are again seen smoking among the trees. This is his first practice in fire-arms, and from that hour he is—a Shooter.

Then there is in most rural parishes—and of rural parishes alone do we condescend to speak—a pistol, a horse one, with a bit of silver on the butt—perhaps one that originally served in the Scots Greys. It is bought, or borrowed, by the young shooter, who begins firing first at barn-doors, then at trees, and then at living things—a strange cur, who, from his lolling tongue, may be supposed to have the hydrophobia—a cat that has purred herself asleep on the sunny churchyard wall, or is watching mice at their hole-mouths among the graves—a water-rat in the mill-lead—or weasel that, running to his retreat in the wall, always turns round to look at you—a goose wandered from his common in disappointed love—or brown duck, easily mistaken by the unscrupulous for a wild one, in pond remote from human dwelling, or on meadow by the river side, away from the clack of the muter-mill. The corby-crow, too, shouted out of his nest on some tree lower than usual, is a good fly-

ing mark to the more advanced class; or morning magpie, a-chatter at skreigh of day close to the cottage door among the chickens; or a flock of pigeons wheeling overhead on the stubble field, or sitting so thick together, that every stock is blue with tempting plumage.

But the pistol is discharged for a fowling-piece—brown and rusty, with a slight crack probably in the muzzle, and a lock out of all proportion to the barrel. Then the young shooter aspires at halfpennies thrown up into the air—and generally hit, for there is never wanting an apparent dent in copper metal; and thence he mounts to the glancing and skimming swallow, a household bird, and therefore to be held sacred, but shot at on the excuse of its being next to impossible to hit him—an opinion strengthened into belief by several summers' practice. But the small brown and white marten wheeling through below the bridge, or along the many-holed red sand-bank, is admitted by all boys to be fair game—and still more, the long-winged legless black devilet, that, if it falls to the ground, cannot rise again, and therefore screams wheeling round the corners and battlements of towers and castles, or far out even of cannon shot, gambols in companies of hundreds, and regiments of a thousand, aloft in the evening ether, within the orbit of the eagle's flight. It seems to boy-

ish eyes, that the creatures near the earth, when but little blue sky is seen between the specks and the wallflowers growing on the coign of vantage—the signal is given to fire; but the devilets are too high in heaven to smell the sulphur. The starling whips with a shrill cry into his nest, and nothing falls to the ground but a tiny bit of mossy mortar, inhabited by a spider!

But the Day of Days arrives at last, when the schoolboy, or rather the college boy, returning to his rural vacation, (for in Scotland college winters tread close, too close, on the heels of academies,) has a gun—a gun in a case—a double-barrel too—of his own—and is provided with a license, probably without any other qualification than that of hit or miss. On some portentous morning he effulges with the sun in velveteen jacket and breeches of the same—many-buttoned gaiters, and an unkerchiefed throat. 'T is the fourteenth of September, and lo! a pointer at his heels—Ponto, of course—a game-bag like a beggar's wallet at his side—destined to be at eve as full of charity—and all the paraphernalia of an accomplished sportsman. Proud, were she to see the sight, would be the "mother that bore him"; the heart of that old sportsman, his daddy, would sing for joy! The chained mastiff in the yard yowls his admiration; the servant lasses uplift the pane of their

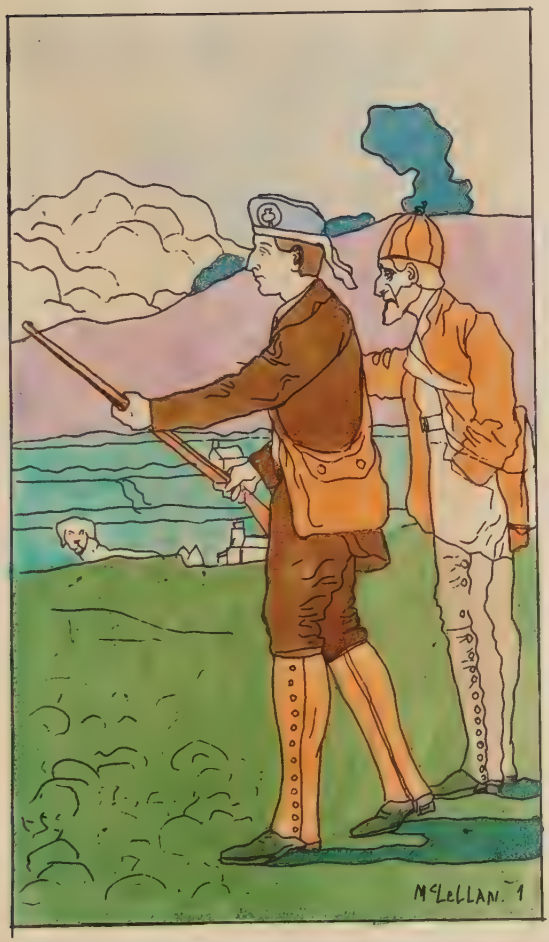
garret, and, with suddenly withdrawn blushes, titter their delight in their rich paper curls and pure night-clothes. Rab Roger, who has been cleaning out the barn, comes forth to partake of the caulker; and away go the footsteps of the old poacher and his pupil through the autumnal rime, off to the uplands, where—for it is one of the earliest of harvests—there is scarcely a single acre of standing corn. The turnip fields are bright green with hope and expectation—and coveys are couching on lazy beds beneath the potato-shaw. Every high hedge, ditch-guarded on either side, shelters its own brood—imagination hears the whir shaking the dewdrops from the broom on the brae—and first one bird and then another, and then the remaining number, in itself no contemptible covey, seems to fancy's ear to spring single, or in clouds, from the coppice brushwood with here and there an intercepting standard tree.

Poor Ponto is much to be pitied. Either having a cold in his nose, or having ante-breakfasted by stealth on a red herring, he can scent nothing short of a badger, and, every other field, he starts in horror, shame, and amazement, to hear himself, without having attended to his points, enclosed in a whirring covey. He is still duly taken between those inexorable knees; out comes the speck-and-span new dog-whip, heavy enough for a horse; and the yowl of the patient is

heard over the whole parish. Mothers press their yet unchastised infants to their breasts; and the schoolmaster, fastening a knowing eye on dunce and ne'er-doweel, holds up, in silent warning, the terror of the taws. Frequent flogging will cowe the spirit of the best man and dog in Britain. Ponto travels now in fear and trembling but a few yards from his tyrant's feet, till, rousing himself to the sudden scent of something smelling strongly, he draws slowly and beautifully, and

"*There fix'd, a perfect semicircle stands.*"

Up runs the Tyro ready-cocked, and, in his eagerness, stumbling among the stubble, when, hark and lo! the gabble of grey goslings, and the bill-protruded hiss of goose and gander! Bang goes the right-hand barrel at Ponto, who now thinks it high time to be off to the tune of "ower the hills and far awa'," while the young gentleman, half-ashamed and half-incensed, half-glad and half-sorry, discharges the left-hand barrel, with a highly improper curse, at the father of the feathered family before him, who receives the shot like a ball in his breast, throws a somerset quite surprising for a bird of his usual habits, and, after biting the dust with his bill, and thumping it with his bottom, breathes an eternal farewell to this sublunary scene —and leaves himself to be paid for at the rate of


McLELLAN. 1

eighteenpence a pound to his justly irritated owner, on whose farm he had led a long, and not only harmless, but honourable and useful life.

It is nearly as impossible a thing as we know, to borrow a dog about the time the sun has reached his meridian, on the First Day of the Partridges. Ponto by this time has sneaked, unseen by human eye, into his kennel, and coiled himself up into the arms of "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." A farmer makes offer of a colley, who, from numbering among his paternal ancestors a Spanish pointer, is quite a Don in his way among the cheepers, and has been known in a turnip field to stand in an attitude very similar to that of setting. Luath has no objection to a frolic over the fields, and plays the part of Ponto to perfection. At last he catches sight of a covey basking, and, leaping in upon them open-mouthed, dispatches them right and left, even like the famous dog Billy killing rats in the pit at Westminster. The birds are bagged with a gentle remonstrance, and Luath's exploit rewarded with a whang of cheese. Elated by the pressure on his shoulder, the young gentleman laughs at the idea of pointing; and fires away, like winking, at every uprise of birds, near or remote; works a miracle by bringing down three at a time, that chanced, unknown to him, to be crossing, and, wearied with such slaughter, lends his gun to the

attendant farmer, who can mark down to an inch, and walks up to the dropped pout as if he could kick her up with his foot; and thus the bag in a few hours is half full of feathers; while, to close with eclat the sport of the day, the cunning elder takes him to a bramble bush, in a wall nook, at the edge of a wood, and returning the gun into his hands, shows him poor pussy sitting with open eyes, fast asleep! The pellets are in her brain, and turning herself over, she crunkles out to her full length, like a piece of untwisting Indian rubber, and is dead. The posterior pouch of the jacket, yet unstained by blood, yawns to receive her—and in she goes plump; paws, ears, body, feet, fud, and all—while Luath, all the way home to the Mains, keeps snooking at the red drops oozing through; for well he knows, in summer's heat and winter's cold, the smell of pussy, whether sitting beneath a tuft of withered grass on the brae, or burrowed beneath a snow wreath. A hare, we certainly must say, in spite of haughtier sportsman's scorn, is, when sitting, a most satisfactory shot.

But let us trace no further thus, step by step, the Pilgrim's Progress. Look at him now—a finished sportsman—on the moors—the bright black boundless Dalwhinnie moors, stretching away, by long Loch Erricht side, into the dim and distant day that hangs, with all its clouds, over the bosom of far Loch Ran-

noch. Is that the pluffer at partridge-pouts who had nearly been the death of poor Ponto? Lord Kennedy himself might take a lesson now from the straight and steady style in which, on the mountain brow, and up to the middle in heather, he brings his Manton to the deadly level! More unerring eye never glanced along brown barrel! Finer forefinger never touched a trigger! Follow him a whole day, and not one wounded bird. All most beautifully arrested on their flight by instantaneous death! Down dropped right and left, like lead on the heather—old cock and hen, singled out among the orphaned brood, as calmly as a cook would do it in the larder from among a pile of plumage. No random shot within—no needless shot out of distance—covered every feather before stir of finger—and body, back, and brain, pierced, broken, shattered! And what perfect pointers! There they stand, still as death—yet instinct with life—the whole half-dozen! Mungo, the black-tanned—Don, the red-spotted—Clara, the snow-white—Primrose, the pale yellow—Basto, the bright brown, and Nimrod, in his coat of many colours, often seen afar through the mists like a meteor.

So much for the Angler's and the Shooter's Progress—now briefly for the Hunter's. Hunting, in this country, unquestionably commences with cats. Few cottages without a cat. If you do not find her on the

mouse watch at the gable end of the house just at the corner, take a solar observation, and by it look for her on bank or brae—somewhere about the premises—if unsuccessful, peep into the byre, and up through a hole among the dusty divots of the roof, and chance is you see her eyes glittering far-ben in the gloom; but if she be not there either, into the barn and up on the mow, and surely she is on the straw or on the baulks below the kipples. No. Well, then, let your eye travel along the edge of that little wood behind the cottage—ay, yonder she is!—but she sees both you and your two terriers—one rough and the other smooth—and, slinking away through a gap in the old hawthorn hedge in among the hazels, she either lies *perdu*, or is up a fir-tree almost as high as the magpie's or corby's nest.

Now—observe—shooting cats is one thing—and hunting them is another—and shooting and hunting, though they may be united, are here treated separately; so, in the present case, the cat makes her escape. But get her watching birds—young larks, perhaps, walking on the lea—or young linnets hanging on the broom—down by yonder in the holm lands, where there are no trees, except indeed that one glorious single tree, the Golden Oak, and he is guarded by Glowrer, and then what a most capital chase! Stretching herself up with crooked back, as if taking

a yawn—off she jumps, with tremendous spangs, and tail, thickened with fear and anger, perpendicular. Youf—youf—youf—go the terriers—head over heels perhaps in their fury—and are not long in turning her—and bringing her to bay at the hedge-root, all ablaze and abristle. A she-devil incarnate!—Hark—all at once now strikes up a trio—Catalani caterwauling the treble—Glowrer taking the bass—and Tearer the tenor—a cruel concert cut short by a squalling throttler. Away—away along the holm—and over the knowe—and into the wood—for lo! the gudewife, brandishing a besom, comes flying demented without her mutch, down to the murder of her tabby—her son, a stout stripling, is seen skirting the potato-field to intercept our flight—and, most formidable of all foes, the Man of the House himself, in his shirt-sleeves and flail in his hand, bolts from the barn, down the croft, across the burn, and up the brae, to cut us off from the Manse. The hunt's up—and 'tis a capital steeple-chase. Disperse—disperse! Down the hill, Jack—up the hill, Gill—dive the dell, Kit—thread the wood, Pat—a hundred yards' start is a great matter—a stern chase is always a long chase—schoolboys are generally in prime wind—the old man begins to puff, and blow, and snort, and put his paws to his paunch—the son is thrown out by a double of dainty Davy's—and the "sair begrutten mither" is

gathering up the torn and tattered remains of Tortoise-shell Tabby, and invoking the vengeance of heaven and earth on her pitiless murderers. Some slight relief to her bursting and breaking heart to vow, that she will make the minister hear of it on the deafest side of his head—ay, even if she have to break in upon him sitting on Saturday night, getting aff by rote his fushionless sermon, in his ain study.

Now, gentle reader, again observe, that though we have now described, *con amore*, a most cruel case of cat-killing, in which we certainly did play a most aggravated part, some Sixty Years since, far indeed are we from recommending such wanton barbarity to the rising generation. We are not inditing a homily on humanity to animals, nor have we been appointed to succeed the Rev. Dr Somerville of Currie, the great Patentee of the Safety Double Bloody Barrel, to preach the annual Gibsonian sermon on that subject—we are simply stating certain matters of fact, illustrative of the rise and progress of the love of pastime in the soul, and leave our readers to draw the moral. But may we be permitted to say, that the naughtiest schoolboys often make the most pious men; that it does not follow, according to the wise saws and modern instances of prophetic old women of both sexes, that he who in boyhood has worried a cat with terriers, will, in manhood, commit murder on one

of his own species; or that peccadilloes are the progenitors of capital crimes. Nature allows to growing lads a certain range of wickedness, *sans peur et sans reproche*. She seems, indeed, to whistle into their ear, to mock ancient females—to laugh at Quakers—to make mouths at a decent man and his wife riding double to church—the matron's thick legs ludicrously bobbing from the pillion, kept firm on Dobbin's rump by her bottom, "*ponderibus librata suis*,"—to tip the wink to young women during sermon on Sunday—and on Saturday, most impertinently to kiss them, whether they will or no, on high-road or by-path—and to perpetrate many other little nameless enormities.

No doubt, at the time, such things will wear rather a suspicious character; and the boy who is detected in the fact, must be punished by pawmy, or privation, or imprisonment from play. But when punished, he is of course left free to resume his atrocious career; nor is it found that he sleeps a whit the less soundly, or shrieks for Heaven's mercy in his dreams. Conscience is not a craven. Groans belong to guilt. But fun and frolic, even when trespasses, are not guilt; and though a cat have nine lives, she has but one ghost—and that will haunt no house where there are terriers. What! surely if you have the happiness of being a parent, you would not wish your only boy—your son and

heir—the blended image of his mother's loveliness and his father's manly beauty—to be a smug, smooth, prim, and proper prig, with his hair always combed down on his forehead, hands always unglaured, and without spot or blemish on his white-thread stockings? You would not wish him, surely, to be always moping and musing in a corner with a good book held close to his nose—botanizing with his maiden aunts—doing the pretty at tea-tables with tabbies, in handing round the short-bread, taking cups, and attending to the kettle—telling tales on all naughty boys and girls—laying up his penny a-week pocket-money in a penny pig—keeping all his clothes neatly folded up in an untumbled drawer—having his own peg for his uncrushed hat—saying his prayers precisely as the clock strikes nine, while his companions are yet at blind-man's buff—and puffed up every Sabbath-eve by the parson's praises of his uncommon memory for a sermon—while all the other boys are scolded for having fallen asleep before Tenthly? You would not wish him, surely, to write sermons himself at his tender years, nay—even to be able to give you chapter and verse for every quotation from the Bible? No. Better far that he should begin early to break your heart, by taking no care even of his Sunday clothes—blotting his copy—impiously pinning pieces of paper to the Dominie's tail, who to him was a second father

—going to the fishing not only without leave but against orders—bathing in the forbidden pool, where the tailor was drowned—drying powder before the school-room fire, and blowing himself and two crack-skulled cronies to the ceiling—tying kettles to the tails of dogs—shooting an old woman's laying hen—galloping bare-backed shelties down stony steeps—climbing trees to the slenderest twig on which bird could build, and up the tooth-of-time-indented sides of old castles after wallflowers and starlings—being run away with in carts by colts against turnpike gates—buying bad ballads from young gipsy-girls, who, on receiving a sixpence, give ever so many kisses in return, saying, "Take your change out of that";—on a borrowed broken-knee'd pony, with a switch-tail—a devil for galloping—not only attending country-races for a saddle and collar, but entering for and winning the prize—dancing like a devil in barns at kirns—seeing his blooming partner home over the blooming heather, most perilous adventure of all in which virgin-puberty can be involved—fighting with a rival in corduroy breeches, and poll shorn beneath a caup, till his eyes just twinkle through the swollen blue—and, to conclude "this strange eventful history," once brought home at one o'clock in the morning, God knows whence or by whom, and found by the shrieking servant, sent out to listen for him in the

moonlight, dead-drunk on the gravel at the gate!

Nay, start not, parental reader—nor, in the terror of anticipation, send, without loss of a single day, for your son at a distant academy, mayhap pursuing even such another career. Trust thou to the genial, gracious, and benign *vis medicatrix naturæ*. What though a few clouds bedim and deform "the innocent brightness of the new-born day"? Lo! how splendid the meridian ether! What though the frost seem to blight the beauty of the budding and blowing rose? Look how she revives beneath dew, rain, and sunshine, till your eyes can even scarce endure the lustre! What though the waters of the sullen fen seem to pollute the snow of the swan? They fall off from her expanded wings, and, pure as a spirit, she soars away, and descends into her own silver lake, stainless as the water-lilies floating round her breast. And shall the immortal soul suffer lasting contamination from the transient chances of its nascent state—in this, less favoured than material and immaterial things that perish? No—it is undergoing endless transmigrations,—every hour a being different, yet the same—dark stains blotted out—rueful inscriptions effaced—many an erasure of impressions once thought permanent, but soon altogether forgotten—and vindicating, in the midst of the earthly corruption in which it is immersed, its own celestial origin, character, and end,

often flickering, or seemingly blown out, like a taper in the wind, but all at once self-reillumined, and shining in inextinguishable and self-fed radiance—like a star in heaven.

Therefore, bad as boys too often are—and a disgrace to the mother who bore them—the cradle in which they were rocked—the nurse by whom they were suckled—the schoolmaster by whom they were flogged—and the hangman by whom it was prophesied they were to be executed—wait patiently for a few years, and you will see them all transfigured—one into a preacher of such winning eloquence, that he almost persuades all men to be Christians—another into a parliamentary orator, who commands the applause of listening senates, and

"*Reads his history in a nation's eyes*"

—one into a painter, before whose thunderous heavens the storms of Poussin "pale their ineffectual fires" —another into a poet composing and playing, side by side, on his own peculiar harp, in a concert of vocal and instrumental music, with Byron, Scott, and Wordsworth—one into a great soldier, who, when Wellington is no more, shall, for the freedom of the world, conquer a future Waterloo—another who, hoisting his flag on the "mast of some tall ammiral," shall, like Eliab Harvey in the Temeraire, lay two

three-deckers on board at once, and clothe some now nameless peak or promontory in immortal glory, like that shining on Trafalgar.

Well, then, after cat-killing comes Coursing. Cats have a look of hares—kittens of leverets—and they are all called Pussy. The terriers are useful still, preceding the line like skirmishers, and with finest noses startling the mawkin from bracken-bush or rush bower, her skylight garret in the old quarry, or her brown study in the brake. Away with your coursing on Marlborough downs, where huge hares are seen squatted from a distance, and the sleek dogs, disrobed of their gaudy trappings, are let slip by a Tryer, running for cups and collars before lords and ladies, and squires of high and low degree—a pretty pastime enough, no doubt, in its way, and a splendid cavalcade. But will it for a moment compare with the sudden and all-unlooked-for start of the "auld witch" from the bunweed-covered lea, when the throat of every pedestrian is privileged to cry "halloo—halloo—halloo"—and whipcord-tailed greyhound and hairy lurcher, without any invidious distinction of birth or bearing, lay their deep breasts to the sward at the same moment, to the same instinct, and brattle over the brae after the disappearing Ears, laid flat at the first sight of her pursuers, as with retroverted eyes she turns her face to the mountain, and seeks the

cairn only a little lower than the falcon's nest.

What signifies any sport in the open air, except in congenial scenery of earth and heaven? Go, thou gentle Cockney! and angle in the New River;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and try a salmon-cast in the old Tay. Go, thou gentle Cockney! and course a suburban hare in the purlieus of Blackheath;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and course an animal that never heard a city-bell, by day a hare, by night an old woman, that loves the dogs she dreads, and, hunt her as you will with a leash and a half of lightfoots, still returns at dark to the same form in the turf-dike of the garden of the mountain cottage. The children, who love her as their own eyes —for she has been as a pet about the family, summer and winter, since that chubby-cheeked urchin, of some five years old, first began to swing in his self-rocking cradle—will scarcely care to see her started —nay, one or two of the wickedest among them will join in the halloo; for often, ere this, "has she cheated the very jowlers, and lauched ower her shouther at the lang dowgs walloping ahint her, sair forfaquhen, up the benty brae—and it's no the day that she's gaun to be killed by Rough Robin, or smooth Spring, or the red Bick, or the hairy Lurcher—though a' fowr be let lowse on her at ance, and ye surround her or she rise." What are your great big fat lazy

English hares, ten or twelve pounds and upwards, who have the food brought to their very mouth in preserves, and are out of breath with five minutes' scamper among themselves—to the middle-sized, hard-hipped, wiry-backed, steel-legged, long-winded mawkins of Scotland, that scorn to taste a leaf of a single cabbage in the wee moorland yardie that shelters them, but prey in distant fields, take a breathing every gloaming along the mountain-breast, untired as young eagles ringing the sky for pastime, and before the dogs seem not so much scouring for life as for pleasure, with such an air of freedom, liberty, and independence, do they fling up the moss and cock their fuds in the faces of their pursuers. Yet stanch are they to the spine—strong in bone, and sound in bottom—see, see how Tickler clears that twenty-feet moss-hag at a single spang like a bird—tops that hedge that would turn any hunter that ever stabled in Melton Mowbray—and then, at full speed northward, moves as upon a pivot within his own length, and close upon his haunches, without losing a foot, off within a point of due south. A kennel! He never was and never will be in a kennel all his free joyful days. He has walked and run—and leaped and swam about—at his own will, ever since he was nine days old—and he would have done so sooner had he had any eyes. None of your stinking

cracklets for him—he takes his meals with the family, sitting at the right hand of the master's eldest son. He sleeps in any bed of the house he chooses; and, though no Methodist, he goes every third Sunday to church. That is the education of a Scottish greyhound—and the consequence is, that you may pardonably mistake him for a deer dog from Badenoch or Lochaber, and no doubt in the world that he would rejoice in a glimpse of the antlers on the weather gleam,

"*Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trode*
To his hills that encircle the sea."

This may be called roughing it—slovenly—coarse—rude—artless—unscientific. But we say no—it is your only coursing. Gods! with what a bounding bosom the schoolboy salutes the dawning of the cool—clear—crisp, yes, crisp October morn, (for there has been a slight frost, and the almost leafless hedgerows are all glittering with rime;) and, little time lost at dress or breakfast, crams the luncheon into his pouch, and away to the Trysting-hill Farmhouse, which he fears the gamekeeper and his grews will have left ere he can run across the two long Scotch miles of moor between him and his joy! With step elastic, he feels flying along the sward as from a spring-board; like a roe, he clears the burns and

bursts his way through the brakes; panting, not from breathlessness but anxiety, he lightly leaps the garden fence without a pole, and lo, the green jacket of one huntsman, the red jacket of another, on the plat before the door, and two or three tall rawboned poachers—and there is mirth and music, fun and frolic, and the very soul of enterprise, adventure, and desperation, in that word—while tall and graceful stand the black, the brindled, and the yellow breed, with keen yet quiet eyes, prophetic of their destined prey, and though motionless now as stone statues of hounds at the feet of Meleager, soon to launch like lightning at the loved halloo!

Out comes the gudewife with her own bottle from the press in the spence, with as big a belly and broad a bottom as her own, and they are no trifle—for the worthy woman has been making much beef for many years, is moreover in the family way, and surely this time there will be twins at least—and pours out a canty caulker for each crowing crony, beginning with the gentle, and ending with the semple, that is our- and her-self; and better speerit never steamed in sma' still. She offers another with "hinny," by way of Athole brose; but it is put off till evening, for coursing requires a clear head, and the same sobriety then adorned our youth that now dignifies our old age. The gudeman, although an elder of the kirk, and

with as grave an aspect as suits that solemn office, needs not much persuasion to let the flail rest for one day, anxious though he be to show the first aits in the market; and donning his broad blue bonnet, and the shortest-tailed auld coat he can find, and taking his kent in his hand, he gruffly gives Wully his orders for a' things about the place, and sets off with the younkers for a holyday. Not a man on earth who has not his own pastime, depend on 't, austere as he may look; and 't would be well for this wicked world if no elder in it had a "sin that maist easily beset him," worse than what Gibby Watson's wife used to call his "awfu' fondness for the Grews"!

And who that loves to walk or wander over the green earth, except indeed it merely be some sonnetteer or ballad-monger, if he had time and could afford it, and lived in a tolerably open country, would not keep, at the very least, three greyhounds? No better eating than a hare, though old blockhead Burton—and he was a blockhead, if blockhead ever there was one in this world—in his Anatomy, chooses to call it melancholy meat. Did he ever, by way of giving dinner a fair commencement, swallow a tureen of hare-soup with half-a-peck of mealy potatoes? If ever he did—and notwithstanding called hare melancholy meat, there can be no occasion whatever for now wishing him any further punishment. If he never did—

then he was on earth the most unfortunate of men. England—as you love us and yourself—cultivate hare-soup, without for a moment dreaming of giving up roasted hare well stuffed with stuffing, jelly sauce being handed round on a large trencher. But there is no such thing as melancholy meat—neither fish, flesh, nor fowl—provided only there be enough of it. Otherwise, the daintiest dish drives you to despair. But independently of spit, pot, and pan, what delight in even daunering about the home farm seeking for a hare? It is quite an art or science. You must consult not only the wind and weather of to-day, but of the night before—and of every day and night back to last Sunday, when probably you were prevented by the rain from going to church. Then hares shift the sites of their country seats every season. This month they love the fallow field—that, the stubble; this, you will see them, almost without looking for them, big and brown on the bare stony upland lea—that, you must have a hawk's eye in your head to discern, discover, detect them, like birds in their nests, embowered below the bunweed or the bracken; they choose to spend this week in a wood impervious to wet or wind—that, in a marsh too plashy for the plover; now you may depend on finding madam at home in the sulks within the very heart of a bramble-bush or dwarf black-thorn thicket, while the squire cocks his

fud at you from the top of a knowe open to blasts from all the airts;—in short, he who knows at all times where to find a hare, even if he knew not one single thing else but the way to his mouth, cannot be called an ignorant man—is probably a better-informed man in the long run than the friend on his right, discoursing about the Turks, the Greeks, the Portugals, and all that sort of thing, giving himself the lie on every arrival of his daily paper. We never yet knew an old courser, (him of the Sporting Annals included,) who was not a man both of abilities and virtues. But where were we?—at the Trysting-hill Farmhouse, jocularly called Hunger-them-Out.

Line is formed, and with measured steps we march towards the hills—for we ourselves are the schoolboy, bold, bright, and blooming as the rose—fleet of foot almost as the very antelope—Oh! now, alas! dim and withered as a stalk from which winter has swept all the blossoms—slow as the sloth along the ground—spindle-shanked as a lean and slippered pantaloon!

"*O heaven! that from our bright and shining years*
Age would but take the things youth heeded not!"

An old shepherd meets us on the long sloping rushy ascent to the hills—and putting his brown withered finger to his gnostic nose, intimates that she is in her old form behind the dike—and the noble dumb ani-

mals, with pricked-up ears and brandished tail, are aware that her hour is come. Plash, plash, through the marsh, and then on the dry furze beyond, you see her large dark-brown eyes—Soho, soho, soho—Halloo, halloo, halloo—for a moment the seemingly horned creature appears to dally with the danger, and to linger ere she lays her lugs on her shoulder, and away, like thoughts pursuing thoughts—away fly hare and hounds towards the mountain.

Stand all still for a minute—for not a bush the height of our knee to break our view—and is not that brattling burst up the brae "beautiful exceedingly," and sufficient to chain in admiration the beatings of the rudest gazer's heart? Yes; of all beautiful sights—none more, none so much so, as the miraculous motion of a four-footed wild animal, changed at once, from a seeming inert sod or stone, into flight fleet as that of the falcon's wing! Instinct against instinct! fear and ferocity in one flight! Pursuers and pursued bound together, in every turning and twisting of their career, by the operation of two headlong passions! Now they are all three upon her—and she dies! No! glancing aside, like a bullet from a wall, she bounds almost at a right angle from her straight course—and, for a moment, seems to have made good her escape. Shooting headlong one over the other, all three, with erected tails, suddenly bring themselves

up—like racing barks when down goes the helm, and one after and another, bowsprit and boom almost entangled, rounds the buoy, and again bears up on the starboard tack upon a wind—and in a close line, head to heel, so that you might cover them all with a sheet—again, all open-mouthed on her haunches, seem to drive, and go with her over the cliff.

We are all on foot—and pray what horse could gallop through among all these quagmires, over all the hags in these peat-mosses, over all the water-cressy and puddocky ditches, sinking soft on hither and thither side, even to the two-legged leaper's ankle or knee—up that hill on the perpendicular strewn with flint-shivers—down these loose-hanging cliffs—through that brake of old stunted birches with stools hard as iron—over that mile of quaking muir where the plover breeds—and—finally—up—up—up to where the dwarfed heather dies away among the cinders, and in winter you might mistake a flock of ptarmigan for a patch of snow?

The thing is impossible—so we are all on foot—and the fleetest keeper that ever footed it in Scotland shall not in a run of three miles give us sixty yards. "Ha! Peter the wild boy, how are you off for wind?"—we exultingly exclaim, in giving Red-jacket the go-by on the bent. But see—see—they are bringing her back again down the Red Mount—glancing aside,

she throws them all three out—yes, all three, and few enow too, though fair play be a jewel—and ere they can recover, she is a-head a hundred yards up the hill. There is a beautiful trial of bone and bottom! Now one, and then another, takes almost imperceptibly the lead; but she steals away from them inch by inch—beating them all blind—and, suddenly disappearing—Heaven knows how—leaves them all in the lurch. With out-lolling tongues, hanging heads, panting sides, and drooping tails, they come one by one down the steep, looking somewhat sheepish, and then lie down together on their sides, as if indeed about to die in defeat. She has carried away her cocked fud unscathed for the third time, from Three of the Best in all broad Scotland—nor can there any longer be the smallest doubt in the world, in the minds of the most sceptical, that she is—what all the country-side have long known her to be—a Witch.

From cat-killing to Coursing, we have seen that the transition is easy in the order of nature—and so is it from coursing to Fox-Hunting—by means, however, of a small intermediate step—the Harriers. Musical is a pack of harriers as a peal of bells. How melodiously they ring changes in the woods, and in the hollow of the mountains! A level country we have already consigned to merited contempt, (though there is no rule without an exception; and, as we

shall see by and by, there is one too here,) and commend us, even with harriers, to the ups and downs of the pastoral or silvan heights. If old or indolent, take your station on a heaven-kissing hill, and hug the echoes to your heart. Or, if you will ride, then let it be on a nimble galloway of some fourteen hands, that can gallop a good pace on the road, and keep sure footing on bridle-paths, or upon the pathless braes—and by judicious horsemanship, you may meet the pack at many a loud-mouthed burst, and haply be not far out at the death. But the schoolboy—and the shepherd—and the whipper-in—as each hopes for favour from his own Diana—let them all be on foot—and have studied the country for every imaginable variety that can occur in the winter's campaign. One often hears of a cunning old fox—but the cunningest old fox is a simpleton to the most guileless young hare. What deceit in every double! What calculation in every squat! Of what far more complicated than Cretan Labyrinth is the creature, now hunted for the first time, sitting in the centre! a-listening the baffled roar! Now into the pool she plunges, to free herself from the fatal scent that lures on death. Now down the torrent course she runs and leaps, to cleanse it from her poor paws, fur-protected from the sharp flints that lame the fiends that so sorely beset her, till many limp along

in their own blood. Now along the coping of stone walls she crawls and scrambles—and now ventures from the wood along the frequented high-road, heedless of danger from the front, so that she may escape the horrid growling in the rear. Now into the pretty little garden of the wayside, or even the village cot, she creeps, as if to implore protection from the innocent children, or the nursing mother. Yes, she will even seek refuge in the sanctuary of the cradle. The terrier drags her out from below a tombstone, and she dies in the churchyard. The hunters come reeking and reeling on, we ourselves among the number —and to the winding horn that echoes reply from the walls of the house of worship—and now, in momentary contrition,

"*Drops a sad, serious tear upon our playful pen!*"

and we bethink ourselves—alas! all in vain, for

"*Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret*"—

of these solemn lines of the poet of peace and humanity:—

"*One lesson, reader, let us two divide,*
Taught by what nature shows and what conceals,
Never to blend our pleasure and our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

It is next to impossible to reduce fine poetry to practice—so let us conclude with a panegyric on

Fox-Hunting. The passion for this pastime is the very strongest that can possess the heart—nor, of all the heroes of antiquity, is there one to our imagination more poetical than Nimrod. His whole character is given, and his whole history, in two words—Mighty Hunter. That he hunted the fox is not probable; for the sole aim and end of his existence was not to exterminate—that would have been cutting his own throat—but to thin man-devouring wild beasts—the Pards—with Leo at their head. But in a land like this, where not even a wolf has existed for centuries—nor a wild boar—the same spirit that would have driven the British youth on the tusk and paw of the Lion and the Tiger, mounts them in scarlet on such steeds as never neighed before the flood, nor "summered high in bliss" on the sloping pastures of undeluged Ararat—and gathers them together in gallant array on the edge of the cover,

> "*When first the hunter's startling horn is heard*
> *Upon the golden hills.*"

What a squadron of cavalry! What fiery eyes and flaming nostrils—betokening with what ardent passion the noble animals will revel in the chase! Bay, brown, black, dun, chestnut, sorrel, grey—of all shades and hues—and every courser distinguished by his own peculiar character of shape and form—

yet all blending harmoniously as they crown the mount; so that a painter would only have to group and colour them as they stand, nor lose, if able to catch them, one of the dazzling lights or deepening shadows streamed on them from that sunny, yet not unstormy sky.

You read in books of travels and romances, of Barbs and Arabs galloping in the desert—and well doth Sir Walter speak of Saladin at the head of his Saracenic chivalry; but take our word for it, great part of all such descriptions are mere falsehood or fudge. Why in the devil's name should dwellers in the desert always be going at full speed? And how can that full speed be any thing more than a slow heavy hand-gallop at the best, the barbs being up to the belly at every stroke? They are always, it is said, in high condition—but we, who know something about horse-flesh, give that assertion the lie. They have seldom any thing either to eat or drink; are lean as church-mice; and covered with clammy sweat before they have ambled a league from the tent. And then such a set of absurd riders, with knees up to their noses, like so many tailors riding to Brentford, *viâ* the deserts of Arabia! Such bits, such bridles, and such saddles! But the whole set-out, rider and ridden, accoutrements and all, is too much for one's gravity, and must occasion a frequent laugh to the wild ass

as he goes braying unharnessed by. But look there! Arabian blood, and British bone! Not bred in and in to the death of all the fine strong animal spirits —but blood intermingled and interfused by twenty crosses, nature exulting in each successive produce, till her power can no further go, and in yonder glorious grey,

"*Gives the world assurance of a horse!*"

Form the Three Hundred into squadron, or squadrons, and in the hand of each rider a sabre alone, none of your lances, all bare his breast but for the silver-laced blue, the gorgeous uniform of the Hussars of England—confound all cuirasses and cuirassiers!—let the trumpet sound a charge, and ten thousand of the proudest of the Barbaric chivalry be opposed with spear and scimitar—and through their snow-ranks will the Three Hundred go like thaw—splitting them into dissolution with the noise of thunder.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it; and where, we ask, were the British cavalry ever overthrown? And how could the great north-country horse-coupers perform their contracts, but for the triumphs of the Turf? Blood—blood there must be, either for strength, or speed, or endurance. The very heaviest cavalry—the Life Guards and the Scots Greys, and all other dragoons, must have blood. But

without racing and fox-hunting, where could it be found? Such pastimes nerve one of the arms of the nation when in battle; but for them 'twould be palsied. What better education, too, not only for a horse, but his rider, before playing a bloodier game in his first war campaign? Thus he becomes demicorpsed with the noble animal; and what easy, equable motion to him is afterwards a charge over a wide level plain, with nothing in the way but a few regiments of flying Frenchmen! The hills and dales of merry England have been the best riding-school to her gentlemen—her gentlemen who have not lived at home at ease—but, with Paget, and Stewart, and Seymour, and Cotton, and Somerset, and Vivian, have left their hereditary halls, and all the peaceful pastimes pursued among the silvan scenery, to try the mettle of their steeds, and cross swords with the vaunted Gallic chivalry; and still have they been in the shock victorious; witness the skirmish that astonished Napoleon at Saldanha—the overthrow that uncrowned him at Waterloo!

"Well, do you know, that, after all you have said, Mr North, I cannot understand the passion and the pleasure of fox-hunting. It seems to me both cruel and dangerous."

Cruelty! Is there cruelty in laying the rein on their necks, and delivering them up to the transport of

McLELLAN

their high condition—for every throbbing vein is visible—at the first full burst of that maddening cry, and letting loose to their delight the living thunderbolts? Danger! What danger but of breaking their own legs, necks, or backs, and those of their riders? And what right have you to complain of that, lying all your length, a huge hulking fellow, snoring and snorting half-asleep on a sofa, sufficient to sicken a whole street? What though it be but a smallish, reddish-brown, sharp-nosed animal, with pricked-up ears, and passionately fond of poultry, that they pursue? After the first Tally-ho, Reynard is rarely seen, till he is run in upon—once, perhaps, in the whole run, skirting a wood, or crossing a common. It is an Idea that is pursued, on a whirlwind of horses, to a storm of canine music—worthy, both, of the largest lion that ever leaped among a band of Moors, sleeping at midnight by an extinguished fire on the African sands. There is, we verily believe it, nothing Foxy in the Fancy of one man in all that glorious field of Three Hundred. Once off and away—while wood and welkin rings—and nothing is felt—nothing is imaged in that hurricane flight, but scorn of all obstructions, dikes, ditches, drains, brooks, palings, canals, rivers, and all the impediments reared in the way of so many rejoicing madmen, by nature, art, and science, in an enclosed, cultivated, civilized, and Christian country.

There they go—prince and peer, baronet and squire—the nobility and gentry of England, the flower of the men of the earth, each on such a steed as Pollux never reined, nor Philip's warlike son—for could we imagine Bucephalus here, ridden by his own tamer, Alexander would be thrown out during the very first burst, and glad to find his way dismounted to a village alehouse for a pail of meal and water. Hedges, trees, groves, gardens, orchards, woods, farmhouses, huts, halls, mansions, palaces, spires, steeples, towers, and temples, all go wavering by, each demigod seeing, or seeing them not, as his winged steed skims or labours along, to the swelling or sinking music, now loud as a near regimental band, now faint as an echo. Far and wide over the country are dispersed the scarlet runners—and a hundred villages pour forth their admiring swarms, as the main current of the chase roars by, or disparted runlets float wearied and all astray, lost at last in the perplexing woods. Crash goes the top-timber of the five-barred gate—away over the ears flies the ex-rough-rider in a surprising somerset—after a succession of stumbles, down is the gallant Grey on knees and nose, making sad work among the fallow—Friendship is a fine thing, and the story of Damon and Pythias most affecting indeed—but Pylades eyes Orestes on his back sorely drowned in sludge, and tenderly leaping over him as

he lies, claps his hands to his ear, and with a "hark forward, tantivy!" leaves him to remount, lame and at leisure—and ere the fallen has risen and shaken himself, is round the corner of the white village-church, down the dell, over the brook, and close on the heels of the straining pack, all a-yell up the hill crowned by the Squire's Folly. "Every man for himself, and God for us all," is the devout and ruling apothegm of the day. If death befall, what wonder? since man and horse are mortal; but death loves better a wide soft bed with quiet curtains and darkened windows in a still room, the clergyman in the one corner with his prayers, and the physician in another with his pills, making assurance doubly sure, and preventing all possibility of the dying Christian's escape. Let oak branch smite the too slowly stooping skull, or rider's back not timely levelled with his steed's; let faithless bank give way, and bury in the brook; let hidden drain yield to fore-feet and work a sudden wreck; let old coal-pit, with briery mouth, betray; and roaring river bear down man and horse, to cliffs unscalable by the very Welsh goat; let duke's or earl's son go sheer over a quarry twenty feet deep, and as many high; yet "without stop or stay, down the rocky way," the hunter train flows on; for the music grows fiercer and more savage—lo! all that remains together of the pack, in far more dreadful madness

than hydrophobia, leaping out of their skins, under insanity from the scent, for Vulpes can hardly now make a crawl of it; and ere he, they, whipper-in, or any one of the other three demoniacs, have time to look in one another's splashed faces, he is torn into a thousand pieces, gobbled up in the general growl; and smug, and smooth, and dry, and warm, and cozey, as he was an hour and twenty-five minutes ago exactly, in his furze bush in the cover—he is now piecemeal in about thirty distinct stomachs; and is he not, pray, well off for sepulture?

CHRISTOPHER
IN HIS SPORTING JACKET
II

CHRISTOPHER
IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

Fytte Second

We are always unwilling to speak of ourselves, lest we should appear egotistical—for egotism we detest. Yet the sporting world must naturally be anxious to know something of our early history—and their anxiety shall therefore be now assuaged. The truth is, that we enjoyed some rare advantages and opportunities in our boyhood regarding field sports, and grew up, even from that first great era in every Lowlander's life, Breeching-day, not only a fisher but a fowler; and it is necessary that we enter into some interesting details.

There had been from time immemorial, it was understood, in the Manse, a duck-gun of very great

length, and a musket that, according to an old tradition, had been out both in the Seventeen and Forty-five. There were ten boys of us, and we succeeded by rotation to gun or musket, each boy retaining possession for a single day only; but then the shooting season continued all the year. They must have been of admirable materials and workmanship; for neither of them so much as once burst during the Seven Years' War. The musket, who, we have often since thought, must surely rather have been a blunderbuss in disguise, was a perfect devil for kicking when she received her discharge; so much so indeed, that it was reckoned creditable for the smaller boys not to be knocked down by the recoil. She had a very wide mouth—and was thought by us "an awfu' scatterer"; a qualification which we considered of the very highest merit. She carried any thing we chose to put into her—there still being of all her performances a loud and favourable report—balls, buttons, chucky-stanes, slugs, or hail. She had but two faults—she had got addicted, probably in early life, to one habit of burning priming, and to another of hanging fire; habits of which it was impossible, for us at least, to break her by the most assiduous hammering of many a new series of flints; but such was the high place she justly occupied in the affection and admiration of us all, that faults like these did not in the least detract

from her general character. Our delight, when she did absolutely and positively and bonâ fide *go off*, was in proportion to the comparative rarity of that occurrence; and as to hanging fire—why we used to let her take her own time, contriving to keep her at the level as long as our strength sufficed, eyes shut perhaps, teeth clenched, face girning, and head slightly averted over the right shoulder, till Muckle-mou'd Meg, who, like most other Scottish females, took things leisurely, went off at last with an explosion like the blowing up of a rock.

The "Lang Gun," again, was of a much gentler disposition, and, instead of kicking, ran into the opposite extreme on being let off, inclining forwards as if she would follow the shot. We believe, however, this apparent peculiarity arose from her extreme length, which rendered it difficult for us to hold her horizontally—and hence the muzzle being attracted earthward, the entire gun appeared to leave the shoulder of the Shooter. That such is the true theory of the phenomenon seems to be proved by this—that when the "Lang Gun" was, in the act of firing, laid across the shoulders of two boys standing about a yard the one before the other, she kicked every bit as well as the blunderbuss. Her lock was of a very peculiar construction. It was so contrived that, when on full cock, the dog-head, as we used to call it,

stood back at least seven inches, and unless the flint was put in to a nicety, by pulling the trigger you by no means caused any uncovering of the pan, but things in general remained *in statu quo*—and there was perfect silence. She had a worm-eaten stock, into which the barrel seldom was able to get itself fairly inserted; and even with the aid of circumvoluting twine, 't was always coggly. Thus too, the vizy (*Anglice* sight) generally inclined unduly to one side or the other, and was the cause of all of us every day hitting and hurting objects of whose existence even we were not aware, till alarmed by the lowing or the galloping of cattle on the hills; and we hear now the yell of an old woman in black bonnet and red cloak, who shook her staff at us like a witch, with the blood running down the furrows of her face, and, with many oaths, maintained that she was murdered. The "Lang Gun" had certainly a strong vomit—and, with slugs or swan-shot, was dangerous at two hundred yards to any living thing. Bob Howie at that distance arrested the career of a mad dog—a single slug having been sent through the eye into the brain. We wonder if one or both of those companions of our boyhood be yet alive—or, like many other great guns that have since made more noise in the world, fallen a silent prey to the rust of oblivion.

Not a boy in the school had a game certificate—

or, as it was called in the parish—"a leeshance." Nor, for a year or two, was such a permit necessary; as we confined ourselves almost exclusively to sparrows. Not that we had any personal animosity to the sparrow individually—on the contrary, we loved him, and had a tame one—a fellow of infinite fancy—with comb and wattles of crimson cloth like a gamecock. But their numbers, without number numberless, seemed to justify the humanest of boys in killing any quantity of sprauchs. Why, they would sometimes settle on the clipped half-thorn and half-beech hedge of the Manse garden in myriads, midge-like; and then out any two of us, whose day it happened to be, used to sally with Muckle-mou'd Meg and the Lang Gun, charged two hands and a finger; and, with a loud shout, startling them from their roost like the sudden casting of a swarm of bees, we let drive into the whir—a shower of feathers was instantly seen swimming in the air, and flower-bed and onion-bed covered with scores of the mortally wounded old cocks with black heads, old hens with brown, and the pride of the eaves laid low before their first crop of peas! Never was there such a parish for sparrows. You had but to fling a stone into any stack-yard, and up rose a sprauch-shower. The thatch of every cottage was drilled by them like honey-combs. House-spouts were of no use in rainy weather—for they were all choked up by sprauch-

nests. At each particular barn-door, when the farmers were at work, you might have thought you saw the entire sparrow population of the parish. Seldom a Sabbath, during pairing, building, breeding, nursing, and training season, could you hear a single syllable of the sermon for their sakes, all a-huddle and a-chirp in the belfry and among the old loose slates. On every stercoraceous deposit on coach, cart, or bridle road, they were busy on grain and pulse; and, in spite of cur and cat, legions embrowned every cottage garden. Emigration itself in many million families would have left no perceptible void; and the inexterminable multitude would have laughed at the Plague.

The other small birds of the parish began to feel their security from our shot, and sung their best, unscared on hedge, bush, and tree. Perhaps, too, for sake of their own sweet strains, we spared the lyrists of Scotland, the linnet and the lark, the one in the yellow broom, the other beneath the rosy cloud—while there was ever a sevenfold red shield before Robin's breast, whether flitting silent as a falling leaf, or trilling his autumnal lay on the rigging or pointed gable-end of barn or byre. Now and then the large bunting, conspicuous on a top-twig, and proud of his rustic psalmody, tempted his own doom—or the cunning stone-chat, glancing about the old dikes, usually shot at in vain—or yellow-hammer, under the ban of the

national superstition, with a drop of the devil's blood beneath his pretty crest, pretty in spite of that cruel creed—or green-finch, too rich in plumage for his poorer song—or shilfa, the beautiful nest-builder, shivering his white-plumed wings in shade and sunshine, in joy the most rapturous, in grief the most despairing of all the creatures of the air—or redpole, balanced on the down of the thistle or flower of the bunweed on the old clovery lea—or, haply twice seen in a season, the very goldfinch himself, a radiant and gorgeous spirit brought on the breeze from afar, and worthy, if only slightly wounded, of being enclosed within a silver cage from Fairy Land.

But we waxed more ambitious as we grew old—and then woe to the rookery on the elm-tree grove! Down dropt the dark denizens in dozens, rebounding with a thud and a skraigh from the velvet moss, which under that umbrage formed firm floor for Titania's feet—while others kept dangling dead or dying by the claws, cheating the crusted pie, and all the blue skies above were intercepted by cawing clouds of distracted parents, now dipping down in despair almost within shot, and now, as if sick of this world, soaring away up into the very heavens, and disappearing to return no more—till sunset should bring silence, and the night air roll off the horrid smell of sulphur from the desolated bowers; and then

indeed would they come all flying back upon their strong instinct, like black-sailed barks before the wind, some from the depth of far-off fir-woods, where they had lain quaking at the ceaseless cannonade, some from the furrows of the new-brairded fields aloof on the uplands, some from deep dell close at hand, and some from the middle of the moorish wilderness.

Happiest of all human homes, beautiful Craig-Hall! For so even now dost thou appear to be—in the rich, deep, mellow, green light of imagination trembling on tower and tree—art thou yet undilapidated and undecayed, in thy old manorial solemnity almost majestical, though even then thou hadst long been tenanted but by a humble farmer's family—people of low degree? The evening-festival of the First Day of the Rooks—nay, scoff not at such an anniversary—was still held in thy ample kitchen—of old the bower of brave lords and ladies bright—while the harper, as he sung his song of love or war, kept his eyes fixed on her who sat beneath the deas. The days of chivalry were gone—and the days had come of curds and cream, and, preferred by some people though not by us, of cream-cheese. Old men and old women, widowers and widows, yet all alike cheerful and chatty at a great age, for often as they near the dead, how more lifelike seem the living! Middle-aged men and middle-aged women, husbands and wives,

those sedate, with hair combed straight on their foreheads, sunburnt faces, and horny hands established on their knees—these serene, with countenances many of them not unlovely—comely all—and with arms decently folded beneath their matronly bosoms—as they sat in their holyday dresses, feeling as if the season of youth had hardly yet flown by, or were, on such a merry meeting, for a blink restored! Boys and virgins—those bold even in their bashfulness—these blushing whenever eyes met eyes—nor would they—nor could they—have spoken in the hush to save their souls; yet ere the evening star arose, many a pretty maiden had, down-looking and playing with the hem of her garment, sung linnet-like her ain favourite auld Scottish sang! and many a sweet sang even then delighted Scotia's spirit, though Robin Burns was but a youth—walking mute among the wild-flowers on the moor—nor aware of the immortal melodies soon to breathe from his impassioned heart!

Of all the year's holydays, not even excepting the First of May, this was the most delightful. The First of May, longed for so passionately from the first peep of the primrose, sometimes came deformed with mist and cloud, or cheerless with whistling winds, or winter-like with a sudden fall of snow. And thus all our hopes were dashed—the roomy hay-waggon remained

in its shed—the preparations made for us in the distant moorland farmhouse were vain—the fishing-rods hung useless on the nails—and disconsolate schoolboys sat moping in corners, sorry, ashamed, and angry with Scotland's springs. But though the "leafy month of June" be frequently showery, it is almost always sunny too. Every half hour there is such a radiant blink that the young heart sings aloud for joy; summer rain makes the hair grow, and hats are of little or no use towards the Longest Day; there is something cheerful even in thunder, if it be not rather too near; the lark has not yet ceased altogether to sing, for he soars over his second nest, unappalled beneath the sablest cloud; the green earth repels from her refulgent bosom the blackest shadows, nor will suffer herself to be saddened in the fulness and brightness of her contentment; through the heaviest flood the blue skies will still be making their appearance with an impatient smile, and all the rivers and burns, with the multitude of their various voices, sing praises unto Heaven.

Therefore, bathing our feet in beauty, we went bounding over the flowery fields and broomy braes to the grove-girdled Craig-Hall. During the long noisy day, we thought not of the coming evening, happy as we knew it was to be; and during the long and almost as noisy evening, we forgot all the pastime

of the day. Weeks before, had each of us engaged his partner for the first country dance, by right his own when supper came, and to sit close to him with her tender side, with waist at first stealthily arm-encircled, and at last boldly and almost with proud display. In the churchyard, before or after Sabbath-service, a word whispered into the ear of blooming and blushing rustic sufficed; or if that opportunity failed, the angler had but to step into her father's burn-side cottage, and with the contents of his basket leave a tender request, and from behind the gable-end carry away a word, a smile, a kiss, and a waving farewell.

Many a high-roofed hall have we, since those days, seen made beautiful with festoons and garlands, beneath the hand of taste and genius decorating, for some splendid festival, the abode of the noble expecting a still nobler guest. But oh! what pure bliss, and what profound, was then breathed into the bosom of boyhood from that glorious branch of hawthorn, in the chimney—itself almost a tree, so thick—so deep—so rich its load of blossoms—so like its fragrance to something breathed from heaven—and so transitory in its sweetness too, that as she approached to inhale it, down fell many a snowflake to the virgin's breath—in an hour all melted quite away! No broom that now-a-days grows on the brae, so yellow as the broom—the golden broom—the broom that seemed

still to keep the hills in sunlight long after the sun himself had sunk—the broom in which we first found the lintwhite's nest—and of its petals, more precious than pearls, saw framed a wreath for the dark hair of that dark-eyed girl, an orphan, and melancholy even in her merriment—dark-haired and dark-eyed indeed, but whose forehead, whose bosom, were yet whiter than the driven snow. Greenhouses—conservatories—orangeries—are exquisitely balmy still—and, in presence of these strange plants, one could believe that he had been transported to some rich foreign clime. But now we carry the burden of our years along with us—and that consciousness bedims the blossoms, and makes mournful the balm, as from flowers in some fair burial-place, breathing of the tomb. But oh! that Craig-Hall hawthorn! and oh! that Craig-Hall broom! they send their sweet rich scent so far into the hushed air of memory, that all the weary worn-out weaknesses of age drop from us like a garment, and even now—the flight of that swallow seems more aerial—more alive with bliss his clay-built nest—the ancient long-ago blue of the sky returns to heaven—not for many a many a long year have we seen so fair—so frail—so transparent and angel-mantle-looking a cloud! The very viol speaks—the very dance responds in Craig-Hall: this—this is the very Festival of the First Day of the Rooks—Mary Mather, the

pride of the parish—the county—the land—the earth—is our partner—and long mayest thou, O moon! remain behind thy cloud—when the parting kiss is given—and the love-letter, at that tenderest moment, dropped into her bosom!

But we have lost the thread of our discourse, and must pause to search for it, even like a spinster of old, in the disarranged spindle of one of those pretty little wheels now heard no more in the humble ingle, hushed by machinery clink-clanking with power-looms in every town and city of the land. Another year, and we often found ourselves—alone—or with one chosen comrade; for even then we began to have our sympathies and antipathies, not only with roses and lilies, or to cats and cheese, but with or to the eyes, and looks, and foreheads, and hair, and voices, and motions, and silence, and rest of human beings, loving them with a perfect love—we must not say hating them with a perfect hatred—alone or with a friend, among the mists and marshes of moors, in silent and stealthy search of the solitary curlew, that is, the Whawp! At first sight of his long bill aloft above the rushes, we could hear our heart beating quick time in the desert; at the turning of his neck, the body being yet still, our heart ceased to beat altogether—and we grew sick with hope when near enough to see the wild beauty of his eye. Unfolded, like a thought, was then

the brown silence of the shy creature's ample wings—and with a warning cry he wheeled away upon the wind, unharmed by our ineffectual hail, seen falling far short of the deceptive distance, while his mate that had lain couched—perhaps in her nest of eggs or young, exposed yet hidden—within killing range, half-running, half-flying, flapped herself into flight, simulating lame leg and wounded wing; and the two disappearing together behind the hills, left us in our vain reason thwarted by instinct, to resume with live hopes rising out of the ashes of the dead, our daily-disappointed quest over the houseless mosses. Yet now and then to our steady aim the bill of the whawp disgorged blood—and as we felt the feathers in our hand, and from tip to tip eyed the outstretched wings, Fortune, we felt, had no better boon to bestow, earth no greater triumph.

Hush—stoop—kneel—crawl—for by all our hopes of mercy—a heron—a heron! An eel dangling across his bill! And now the water-serpent has disappeared! From morning dawn hath the fowl been fishing here—perhaps on that very stone—for it is one of those days when eels are a-roaming in the shallows, and the heron knows that they are as likely to pass by that stone as any other—from morning dawn—and 'tis now past meridian, half-past two! Be propitious, oh ye Fates! and never—never—shall he again fold his

wings on the edge of his gaping nest, on the trees that overtop the only tower left of the old castle. Another eel! and we too can crawl silent as the sinuous serpent. Flash! Bang! over he goes dead—no, not dead—but how unlike that unavailing flapping, as head over heels he goes spinning over the tarn, to the serene unsettling of himself from sod or stone, when, his hunger sated, and his craw filled with fish for his far-off brood, he used to lift his blue bulk into the air, and with long depending legs, at first floated away like a wearied thing, but soon, as his plumes felt the current of air homewards flowing, urged swifter and swifter his easy course—laggard and lazy no more—leaving leagues behind him, ere you had shifted your motion in watching his cloudlike career, soon invisible among the woods!

The disgorged eels are returned—some of them alive—to their native element—the mud. And the dead heron floats away before small winds and waves into the middle of the tarn. Where is he—the matchless Newfoundlander—*nomine gaudens* Fro, because white as the froth of the sea? Off with a colley. So—stript with the first intention, we plunge from a rock, and,

> "*Though in the scowl of heaven, the tarn*
> *Grows dark as we are swimming*,"

Draco-like, breast-high, we stem the surge, and with

the heron floating before us, return to the heather-fringed shore, and give three cheers that startle the echoes, asleep from year's end to year's end, in the Grey-Linn Cairn.

Into the silent twilight of many a wild rock-and-river scene, beautiful and bewildering as the fairy work of sleep, will he find himself brought who knows where to seek the heron in all his solitary haunts. For often when the moors are storm-swept, and his bill would be baffled by the waves of tarn and loch, he sails away from his swinging-tree, and through some open glade dipping down to the secluded stream, alights within the calm chasm, and folds his wings in the breezeless air. The clouds are driving fast aloft in a carry from the sea—but they are all reflected in that pellucid pool—so perfect the cliff-guarded repose. A better day—a better hour—a better minute for fishing could not have been chosen by Mr Heron, who is already swallowing a par. Another—and another—but something falls from the rock into the water; and suspicious, though unalarmed, he leisurely addresses himself to a short flight up the channel—round that tower-like cliff standing strangely by itself, with a crest of self-sown flowering shrubs; and lo! another vista, if possible, just a degree more silent—more secluded—more solitary—beneath the mid-day night of woods! To shoot thee there—would be

as impious as to have killed a sacred Ibis stalking in the shade of an Egyptian temple. Yet it is fortunate for thee—folded up there, as thou art, as motionless as thy sitting-stone—that at this moment we have no fire-arms—for we had heard of a fish-like trout in that very pool, and this—O Heron—is no gun but a rod. Thou believest thyself to be in utter solitude—no sportsman but thyself in the chasm—for the otter, thou knowest, loves not such very rocky rivers; and fish with bitten shoulder seldom lies here—that epicure's tasted prey. Yet within ten yards of thee lies couched thy enemy, who once had a design upon thee, even in the very egg. Our mental soliloquy disturbs not thy watchful sense—for the air stirs not when the soul thinks, or feels, or fancies about man, bird, or beast. We feel, O Heron! that there is not only humanity—but poetry, in our being. Imagination haunts and possesses us in our pastimes, colouring them even with serious—solemn—and sacred light—and thou assuredly hast something priest-like and ancient in thy look—and about thy light-blue plume robes, which the very elements admire and reverence—the waters wetting them not—nor the winds ruffling—and moreover we love thee—Heron—for the sake of that old castle, beside whose gloom thou utteredst thy first feeble cry! A Ruin nameless, traditionless—sole, undisputed property of Oblivion!

Hurra!—Heron—hurra! why, that was an awkward tumble—and very nearly had we hold of thee by the tail! Didst thou take us for a water-kelpie? A fright like that is enough to leave thee an idiot all the rest of thy life. 'T is a wonder thou didst not go into fits—but thy nerves must be sorely shaken—and what an account of this adventure will certainly be shrieked unto thy mate, to the music of the creaking boughs! Not, even wert thou a secular bird of ages, wouldst thou ever once again revisit this dreadful place. For fear has a wondrous memory in all dumb creatures—and rather wouldst thou see thy nest die of famine, than seek for fish in this man-monster-haunted pool! Farewell! farewell!

Many are the hundreds of hill and mountain lochs to us as familiarly known, round all their rushy or rocky margins, as that pond there in the garden of Buchanan Lodge. That pond has but one goose and one gander, and nine goslings—about half-a-dozen trouts, if indeed they have not sickened and died of Nostalgia, missing in the stillness the gurgle of their native Tweed—and a brace of perch, now nothing but prickle. But the lochs—the hill, the mountain lochs now in our mind's eye and our mind's ear,—heaven and earth! the bogs are black with duck, teal, and widgeon—up there "comes for food or play" to the holla of the winds, a wedge of wild geese, piercing

the marbled heavens with clamour—and lo! in the very centre of the mediterranean, the Royal Family of the Swans! Up springs the silver sea-trout in the sunshine—see Sir Humphrey!—a salmon—a salmon fresh run in love and glory from the sea!

For how many admirable articles are there themes in the above short paragraph! Duck, teal, and widgeon, wild-geese, swans! And first, duck, teal, and widgeon. There they are, all collected together, without regard to party politics, in their very best attire, as thick as the citizens of Edinburgh, their wives, sweethearts, and children, on the Calton Hill, on the first day of the King's visit to Scotland. As thick, but not so steady—for what swimming about in circles—what ducking and diving is there!—all the while accompanied with a sort of low, thick, gurgling, not unsweet, nor unmusical quackery, the expression of the intense joy of feeding, freedom, and play. Oh! Muckle-mou'd Meg! neither thou nor the "Lang Gun" are of any avail here—for that old drake, who, together with his shadow, on which he seems to be sitting, is almost as big as a boat in the water, the outermost landward sentinel, near as he seems to be in the deception of the clear frosty air, is yet better than three hundred yards from the shore—and, at safe distance, cocks his eye at the fowler. There is no boat on the loch, and knowing that, how tempting in its un-

approachable reeds and rushes, and hut-crested knoll —a hut built perhaps by some fowler, in the olden time—yon central Isle! But be still as a shadow—for lo! a batch of Whig-seceders, paddling all by themselves towards that creek—and as surely as our name is Christopher, in another quarter of an hour, they will consist of killed, wounded, and missing. On our belly—with unhatted head just peering over the knowe—and Muckle-mou'd Meg slowly and softly stretched out on the rest, so as not to rustle a windle-strae, we lie motionless as a mawkin, till the coterie collects together for simultaneous dive down to the aquatic plants and insects of the fast-shallowing bay; and, just as they are upon the turn with their tails, a single report, loud as a volley, scatters the unsparing slugs about their doups, and the still clear water, in sudden disturbance, is afloat with scattered feathers, and stained with blood.

Now is the time for the snow-white, here and there ebon-spotted Fro—who with burning eyes has lain couched like a spaniel, his quick breath ever and anon trembling on a passionate whine, to bounce up, as if discharged by a catapulta, and first with immense and enormous high-and-far leaps, and then, fleet as any greyhound, with a breast-brushing brattle down the brae, to dash, all fours, like a flying squirrel fearlessly from his tree, many yards into the bay with one

splashing and momentarily disappearing spang, and then, head and shoulders and broad line of back and rudder tail, all elevated above or level with the wavy water line, to mouth first that murdered mawsey of a mallard, lying as still as if she had been dead for years, with her round, fat, brown bosom towards heaven—then that old Drake, in a somewhat similar posture, but in more gorgeous apparel, his belly being of a pale grey, and his back delicately pencilled and crossed with numberless waved dusky lines—precious prize to one skilled like us in the angling art—next—nobly done, glorious Fro—that cream colour crowned widgeon, with bright rufus chestnut breast, separated from the neck by loveliest waved ash-brown and white lines, while our mind's eye feasteth on the indescribable and changeable green beauty-spot of his wings—and now, if we mistake not, a Golden Eye, best described by his name—finally, that exquisite little duck the Teal; yes, poetical in its delicately pencilled spots as an Indian shell, and when kept to an hour, roasted to a minute, gravied in its own wild richness, with some few other means and appliances to boot, carved finely—most finely—by razor-like knife, in a hand skilful to dissect and cunning to divide—tasted by a tongue and palate both healthily pure as the dewy petal of a morning rose—swallowed by a gullet felt gradually to be extending itself in its intense

delight—and received into a stomach yawning with greed and gratitude,—Oh! surely the thrice-blessed of all web-footed birds; the apex of Apician luxury; and able, were any thing on the face of this feeble earth able, to detain a soul, on the very brink of fate, a short quarter of an hour from an inferior Elysium!

How nobly, like a craken or sea-serpent, Fro reareth his massy head above the foam, his gathered prey seized—all four—by their limber necks, and brightening, like a bunch of flowers, as they glitter towards the shore! With one bold body-shake, felt to the point of each particular hair, he scatters the water from his coat like mist, reminding one of that glorious line in Shakspeare,

"*Like dewdrops from the Lion's mane*,"

advancing with sinewy legs seemingly lengthened by the drenching flood, and dripping tail stretched out in all its broad longitude, with hair almost like white hanging plumes—magnificent as tail of the Desert-Born at the head of his seraglio in the Arabian Sands. Halfway his master meets his beloved Fro on the slope; and first proudly and haughtily pausing to mark our eye, and then humbly, as beseemeth one whom nature, in his boldest and brightest bearing, hath yet made a slave—he lays the offering at our

feet, and having felt on his capacious forehead the approving pressure of our hand,

> "*While, like the murmur of a dream,*
> *He hears us breathe his name,*"

he suddenly flings himself round with a wheel of transport, and in many a widening circle pursues his own uncontrollable ecstasies with whirlwind speed; till, as if utterly joy-exhausted, he brings his snow-white bulk into dignified repose on a knoll, that very moment illuminated by a burst of sunshine!

Not now—as fades upon our pen the solemn light of the dying day—shall we dare to decide, whether or not Nature—O most matchless creature of thy kind!—gave thee, or gave thee not, the gift of an immortal soul!—Better such creed—fond and foolish though it may be—yet scarcely unscriptural, for in each word of scripture there are many meanings, even when each sacred syllable is darkest to be read,—better such creed than that of the atheist or sceptic, distracted ever in his seemingly sullen apathy, by the dim, dark doom of dust. Better that Fro should live, than that Newton should die—for ever. What though the benevolent Howard devoted his days to visit the dungeon's gloom, and by intercession with princes, to set the prisoners free from the low damp-dripping stone roof of the deep-dug cell beneath the founda-

tion rocks of the citadel, to the high dew-dropping vault of heaven, too, too dazzlingly illumined by the lamp of the insufferable sun! There reason triumphed —those were the works of glorified humanity. But thou—a creature of mere instinct—according to Descartes, a machine, an automaton—hadst yet a constant light of thought and of affection in thine eyes—nor wert thou without some glimmering and mysterious notions—and what more have we ourselves?—of life and of death! Why fear to say that thou wert divinely commissioned and inspired—on that most dismal and shrieking hour, when little Harry Seymour, that bright English boy, "whom all that looked on loved," entangled among the cruel chains of those fair water-lilies, all so innocently yet so murderously floating round him, was, by all standing or running about there with clenched hands, or kneeling on the sod—given up to inextricable death? We were not present to save the dear boy, who had been delivered to our care as to that of an elder brother, by the noble lady who, in her deep widow's weeds, kissed her sole darling's sunny head, and disappeared. We were not present—or by all that is holiest in heaven or on earth—our arms had been soon around thy neck, when thou wert seemingly about to perish!

But a poor dumb despised dog—nothing, as some say, but animated dust—was there—and without

shout or signal—for all the Christian creatures were alike helpless in their despair—shot swift as a sunbeam over the deep, and by those golden tresses, sinking and brightening through the wave, brought the noble child ashore, and stood over him, as if in joy and sorrow, lying too like death on the sand! And when little Harry opened his glazed eyes, and looked bewildered on all the faces around—and then fainted, and revived and fainted again—till at last he came to dim recollection of this world on the bosom of the physician brought thither with incomprehensible speed from his dwelling afar off—thou didst lick his cold white hands and blue face, with a whine that struck awful pity into all hearts, and thou didst follow him—one of the group—as he was borne along—and frisking and gambolling no more all that day, gently didst thou lay thyself down at the feet of his little bed, and watch there unsleeping all night long! For the boy knew that God had employed one of his lowly creatures to save him—and beseeched that he might lie there to be looked at by the light of the taper, till he himself, as the pains went away, might fall asleep! And we, the watchers by his bedside, heard him in his dreams mentioning the creature's name in his prayers.

Yet at times—O Fro—thou wert a sad dog indeed—neither to bind nor to hold—for thy blood was

soon set a-boil, and thou—like Julius Cæsar—and Demetrius Poliorcetes—and Alexander the Great—and many other ancient and modern kings and heroes—thou wert the slave of thy passions. No Scipio wert thou with a Spanish captive. Often—in spite of threatening eye and uplifted thong—uplifted only, for thou went'st unflogged to thy grave—didst thou disappear for days at a time—as if lost or dead. Rumours of thee were brought to the kirk by shepherds from the remotest hills in the parish—most confused and contradictory—but, when collected and compared, all agreeing in this—that thou wert living, and life-like, and life-imparting, and after a season from thy travels to return; and return thou still didst—wearied often and woe-begone—purpled thy snow-white curling—and thy broad breast torn, not disfigured, by honourable wounds. For never yet saw we a fighter like thee. Up on thy hind legs in a moment, like a growling Polar monster, with thy fore-paws round thy foeman's neck, bull-dog, colley, mastiff, or greyhound, and down with him in a moment, with as much ease as Cass, in the wrestling ring at Carlisle, would throw a Bagman, and then woe to the throat of the down-fallen, for thy jaws were shark-like as they opened and shut with their terrific tusks, grinding through skin and sinew to the spine.

Once, and once only—bullied out of all endurance

McLELLAN

by a half-drunken carrier—did we consent to let thee engage in a pitched battle with a mastiff victorious in fifty fights—a famous shanker—and a throttler beyond all compare. It was indeed a bloody business—now growling along the glawr of the road—a hairy hurricane—now snorting in the suffocating ditch—now fair play on the clean and clear crown of the causey—now rolling over and over through a chance-open white little gate, into a cottage-garden—now separated by choking them both with a cord—now brought out again with savage and fiery eyes to the scratch on a green plat round the signboard-swinging tree in the middle of the village—auld women in their mutches crying out, "Shame! whare's the minister?"—young women, with combs in their pretty heads, blinking with pale and almost weeping faces from low-lintelled doors—children crowding for sight and safety on the louping-on-stane—and loud cries ever and anon at each turn and eddy of the fight, of "Well done, Fro, well done, Fro—see how he worries his windpipe—well done, Fro!" for Fro was the delight and glory of the whole parish, and the honour of all its inhabitants, male and female, was felt to be staked on the issue—while at intervals was heard the harsh hoarse voice of the carrier and his compeers, cursing and swearing in triumph in a many-oathed language peculiar to the race that drive the broad-

wheeled waggons with the high canvas roofs, as the might of Teeger prevailed, and the indomitable Fro seemed to be on his last legs beneath a grip of the jugular, and then stretched motionless and passive —in defeat or death. A mere *ruse* to recover wind. Like unshorn Samson starting from his sleep, and snapping like fired flax the vain bands of the Philistines, Fro whawmled Teeger off, and twisting round his head in spite of the grip on the jugular, the skin stretching and giving way in a ghastly but unfelt wound, he suddenly seized with all his tusks his antagonist's eye, and bit it clean out of the socket. A yowl of unendurable pain—spouting of blood—sickness—swooning—tumbling over—and death. His last fight is over! His remaining eye glazed—his protruded tongue bitten in anguish by his own grinding teeth—his massy hind legs stretched out with a kick like a horse—his short tail stiffens—he is laid out a grim corpse—flung into a cart tied behind the waggon—and off to the tan-yard.

No shouts of victory—but stern, sullen, half-ashamed silence—as of guilty things after the perpetration of a misdeed. Still glaring savagely, ere yet the wrath of fight has subsided in his heart, and going and returning to the bloody place, uncertain whether or not his enemy were about to return, Fro finally lies down at some distance, and with bloody

flews keeps licking his bloody legs, and with long darting tongue cleansing the mire from his neck, breast, side, and back—a sanguinary spectacle! He seems almost insensible to our caresses, and there is something almost like upbraiding in his victorious eyes. Now that his veins are cooling, he begins to feel the pain of his wounds—many on, and close to vital parts. Most agonizing of all—all his four shanks are tusk-pierced, and, in less than ten minutes, he limps away to his kennel, lame as if riddled by shot—

"*Heu quantum mutatus ab illo*
Hectore!"

gore-besmeared and dirt-draggled—an hour ago serenely bright as the lily in June, or the April snow. The huge waggon moves away out of the clachan without its master, who, ferocious from the death of the other brute he loved, dares the whole school to combat. Off fly a dozen jackets—and a devil's dozen of striplings from twelve past to going sixteen—firmly wedged together like the Macedonian Phalanx—are yelling for the fray. There is such another shrieking of women as at the taking of Troy. But

"*The Prince of Mearns stept forth before the crowd,*
And, Carter, challenged you to single fight!"

Bob Howie, who never yet feared the face of clay, and had too great a heart to suffer mere children to

combat the strongest and most unhappy man in the whole country—stripped to the buff; and there he stands, with

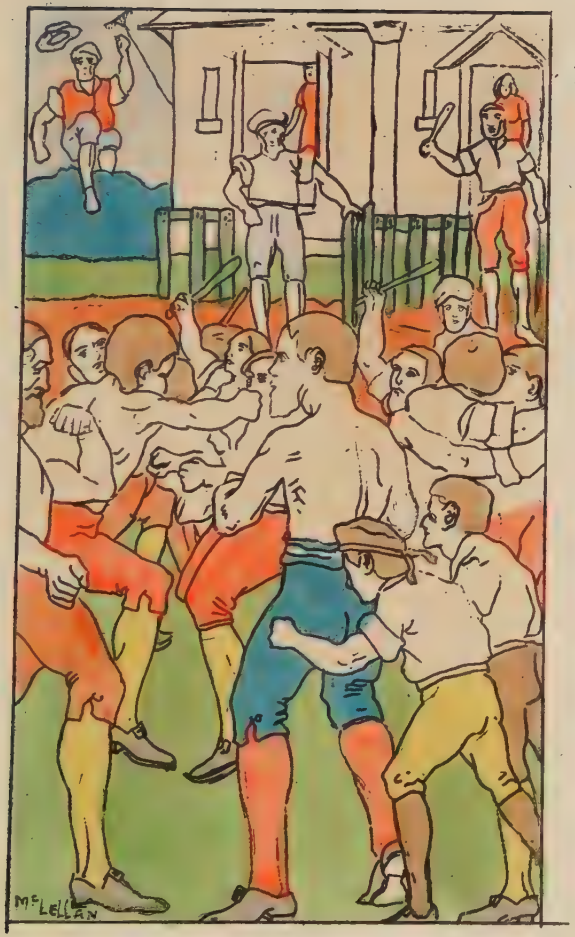
"*An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;*"

shoulders like Atlas—breast like Hercules—and arms like Vulcan. The heart of Benjamin the waggoner dies within him—he accepts the challenge for a future day—and retreating backwards to his clothes, receives a right-hander as from a sledge-hammer on the temple, that fells him like an ox. The other carters all close in, but are sent spinning in all directions as from the sails of a windmill. Ever as each successive lout seeks the earth, we savage schoolboys rush in upon him in twos, and threes, and fours, basting and battering him as he bawls; at this very crisis—so fate ordained—are seen hurrying down the hill from the south, leaving their wives, sweethearts, and asses in the rear, with coal-black hair and sparkling eyes, brown brawny legs, and clenched iron fists at the end of long arms, swinging flail-like at all times, and never more than now, ready for the fray, a gang of Gipsies! while—beautiful coincidence!—up the hill from the north come on, at double-quick time, an awkward squad of as grim Milesians as ever buried a pike in a Protestant. Nor question nor reply; but in a moment a general mêlée. Men at work in the hay-fields, who

would not leave their work for a dog-fight, fling down scythe and rake, and over the hedges into the high-road, a stalwart reinforcement. Weavers leap from their treddles—doff their blue aprons, and out into the air. The red-cowled tailor pops his head through a skylight, and next moment is in the street. The butcher strips his long light-blue linen coat, to engage a Paddy; and the smith, ready for action—for the huge arms of Burniwind are always bare—with a hand-ower-hip delivery, makes the head of the king of the gipsies ring like an anvil. There has been no marshalling of forces—yet lo! as if formed in two regular lines by the Adjutant himself after the first tuilzie, stand the carters, the gipsies, and the Irish-men, opposed to Bob Howie, the butcher, the smith, the tailor, the weaver, the haymakers, and the boys from the manse—the latter drawn up cautiously, but not cowardly, in the rear. What a twinkling of fists and shillelas! what bashed and bloody noses! cut blubber lips—cheekbones out of all proportion to the rest of the face, and, through sudden black and blue tumefactions, men's changed into pigs' eyes! And now there is also rugging of caps and mutches and hair, "*femineo ululatu*," for the Egyptian Amazons bear down like furies on the glee'd widow that keeps the change-house, half-witted Shoosy that sells yellow sand, and Davie Donald's dun daughter, commonly

called Spunkie. What shrieking and tossing of arms, round the whole length and breadth of the village! Where is Simon Andrew the constable? Where is auld Robert Maxwell the ruling elder? What can have become of Laird Warnock, whose word is law? And what can the Minister be about, can any body tell, that he does not come flying from the manse to save the lives of his parishioners from cannibals, and gipsies, and Eerish, murdering their way to the gallows?

How—why—or when—that bloody battle ceased to be, was never distinctly known either then or since; but, like every thing else, it had an end—and even now we have a confused dream of the spot at its termination—naked men lying on their backs in the mire, all drenched in blood—with women, some old and ugly, with shrivelled witch-like hag breasts, others young, and darkly, swarthily, blackly beautiful, with budding or new-blown bosoms unkerchiefed in the colley-shangy—perilous to see—leaning over them: and these were the Egyptians! Men in brown shirts, gore-spotted, with green bandages round their broken heads, laughing, and joking, and jeering, and singing, and shouting, though desperately mauled and mangled—while Scottish wives, and widows, and maids, could not help crying out in sympathy, "Oh! but they're bonnie men—what a pity they should aye be sae fond


McLELLAN

o' fechting, and a' manner o' mischief!"—and these were the Irishmen! Retired and apart, hangs the weaver, with his head over a wall, dog-sick, and bocking in strong convulsions; some haymakers are washing their cut faces in the well; the butcher, bloody as a bit of his own beef, walks silent into the shambles; the smith, whose grimy face hides its pummelling, goes off grinning a ghastly smile in the hands of his scolding, yet not unloving wife; the tailor, gay as a flea, and hot as his own goose, to show how much more he has given than received, offers to leap any man on the ground, hop-step-and-jump, for a mutchkin—while Bob Howie walks about, without a visible wound, except the mark of bloody knuckles on his brawny breast, with arms akimbo, seaman-fashion—for Bob had been at sea—and as soon as the whisky comes, hands it about at his own expense, caulker after caulker, to the vanquished—for Bob was as generous as brave; had no spite at the gipsies; and as for Irishmen, why they were ranting, roving, red-hot, dare-devil boys, just like himself; and after the fight, he would have gone with them to Purgatory, or a few steps further down the hill. All the battle through, we manse-boys had fought, it may be said, behind the shadow of him our hero; and in warding off mischief from us, he received not a few heavy body-blows from King Carew, a descendant of Bamfylde Moore,

and some crown-cracks from the shillelas of the Connaught Rangers.

Down comes a sudden thunder-plump, making the road a river—and to the whiff o' lightning, all in the shape of man, woman, and child, are under roof-cover. The afternoon soon clears up, and the hay-makers leave the clanking empty gill or half-mutchkin stoup, for the field, to see what the rain has done—the forge begins again to roar—the sound of the flying shuttle tells that the weaver is again on his treddles; the tailor hoists up his little window in the thatch, in that close confinement, to enjoy the caller air—the tinklers go to encamp on the common—"the air is balm"—insects, dropping from eave and tree, "show to the sun their waved coats dropt with gold"—though the season of bird-singing be over and gone, there is a pleasant chirping hereabouts, thereabouts, every where; the old blind beggar, dogled, goes from door to door, unconscious that such a stramash has ever been—and dancing round our champion, away we schoolboys all fly with him to swim in the Brother Loch, taking our fishing-rods with us, for one clap of thunder will not frighten the trout; and about the middle or end of July, we have known great labbers, twenty inches long, play wallop between our very feet, in the warm shallow water, within a yard of the edge, to the yellow-bodied,

tinsey-tailed, black half-heckle, with brown mallard wing, a mere midge, but once fixed in lip or tongue, "inextricable as the gored lion's bite."

But ever after that Passage in the life of Fro, his were, on the whole, years of peace. Every season seemed to strengthen his sagacity, and to unfold his wonderful instincts. Most assuredly he knew all the simpler parts of speech—all the household words in the Scottish language. He was, in all our pastimes, as much one of ourselves, as if, instead of being a Pagan with four feet, he had been a Christian with two. As for temper, we trace the sweetness of our own to his; an angry word from one he loved, he forgot in half a minute, offering his lion-like paw; yet there were particular people he could not abide, nor from their hands would he have accepted a roasted potato out of the dripping pan, and in this he resembled his master. He knew the Sabbath-day as well as the sexton—and never was known to bark till the Monday morning when the cock crew; and then he would give a long musical yowl, as if his breast were relieved from silence. If ever, in this cold, changeful, inconstant world, there was a friendship that might be called sincere, it was that which, half a century ago and upwards, subsisted between Christopher North and John Fro. We never had a quarrel in all our lives—and within these two months we made a pilgrimage

to his grave. He was buried—not by our hands, but by the hands of one whose tender and manly heart loved the old, blind, deaf, staggering creature to the very last—for such in his fourteenth year he truly was—a sad and sorry sight to see, to them who remembered the glory of his stately and majestic years. One day he crawled with a moan-like whine to our brother's feet, and expired. Reader, young, bright, and beautiful though thou be—remember all flesh is dust!

This is an episode—a tale, in itself complete, yet growing out of, and appertaining to, the main plot of Epic or Article. You will recollect we were speaking of ducks, teals, and widgeons—and we come now to the next clause of the verse—wild geese and swans.

Some people's geese are all swans; but so far from that being the case with ours—sad and sorry are we to say it—now all our swans are geese. But in our buoyant boyhood, all God's creatures were to our eyes just as God made them; and there was ever—especially birds—a tinge of beauty over them all. What an inconceivable difference—distance—to the imagination, between the nature of a tame and a wild goose! Aloft in heaven, themselves in night invisible, the gabble of a cloud of wild geese is sublime. Whence comes it—whither goes it—for what end, and by what power impelled? Reason sees not into the darkness of

instinct—and therefore the awe-struck heart of the night-wandering boy beats to hear the league-long gabble that probably has winged its wedge-like way from the lakes, and marshes, and dreary morasses of Siberia, from Lapland, or Iceland, or the unfrequented and unknown northern regions of America—regions set apart, quoth Bewick we believe, for summer residences and breeding places, and where they are amply provided with a variety of food, a large portion of which must consist of the larvæ of gnats, and myriads of insects, there fostered by the unsetting sun! Now they are gabbling good Gaelic over a Highland night-moor. Perhaps in another hour the descending cloud will be covering the wide waters at the head of the wild Loch Maree—or, silent and asleep, the whole host be riding at anchor around Lomond's Isles!

But 't is now mid-day—and lo! in that mediterranean—a flock of wild Swans! Have they dropt down from the ether into the water almost as pure as ether, without having once folded their wings, since they rose aloft to shun the insupportable northern snows hundreds of leagues beyond the storm-swept Orcades? To look at the quiet creatures, you might think that they had never left the circle of that little loch. There they hang on their shadows, even as if asleep in the sunshine; and now stretching out their long

wings—how apt for flight from clime to clime!—joyously they beat the liquid radiance, till to the loud flapping high rises the mist, and wide spreads the foam, almost sufficient for a rainbow. Safe are they from all birds of prey. The Osprey dashes down on the teal, or sea-trout, swimming within or below their shadow. The great Erne, or Sea-eagle, pounces on the mallard, as he mounts from the bulrushes before the wild swans sailing, with all wings hoisted, like a fleet—but osprey nor eagle dares to try his talons on that stately bird—for he is bold in his beauty, and formidable as he is fair; the pinions that swim and soar can also smite; and though the one be a lover of war, the other of peace, yet of them it may be said,

"*The eagle he is lord above,*
The swan is lord below!"

To have shot such a creature—so large—so white—so high-soaring—and on the winds of midnight wafted from so far—a creature that seemed not merely a stranger in that loch, but belonging to some mysterious land in another hemisphere, whose coast ships with frozen rigging have been known to visit, driving under bare poles through a month's snow storms—to have shot such a creature was an era in our imagination, from which, had nature been more prodigal, we might have sprung up a poet. Once, and

but once, we were involved in the glory of that event. The creature had been in a dream of some river or lake in Kamtschatka—or ideally listening,

"Across the waves' tumultuous roar,
The wolf's long howl from Oonalashka's shore,"

when, guided by our good genius and our brightest star, we suddenly saw him sitting asleep in all his state, within gunshot, in a bay of the moonlight loch! We had nearly fainted—died on the very spot—and why were we not entitled to have died as well as any other passionate spirit, whom joy ever divorced from life? We blew his black bill into pieces—not a feather on his head but was touched; and like a little white-sailed pleasure-boat caught in a whirlwind, the wild swan spun round, and then lay motionless on the water, as if all her masts had gone by the board. We were all alone that night—not even Fro was with us; we had reasons for being alone, for we wished not that there should be any footfall but our own round that mountain-hut. Could we swim? Ay, like the wild swan himself, through surge or breaker. But now the loch was still as the sky, and twenty strokes carried us close to the glorious creature, which, grasped by both hands, and supporting us as it was trailed beneath our breast, while we floated rather than swam ashore, we felt to be in verity our—

Prey! We trembled with a sort of fear, to behold him lying indeed dead on the sward. The moon—the many stars, here and there one wondrously large and lustrous—the hushed glittering loch—the hills, though somewhat dimmed, green all winter through, with here and there a patch of snow on their summits in the blue sky, on which lay a few fleecy clouds—the mighty foreign bird, whose plumage we had never hoped to touch but in a dream, lying like the ghost of something that ought not to have been destroyed—the scene was altogether such as made our wild young heart quake, and almost repent of having killed a creature so surpassingly beautiful. But that was a fleeting fancy—and over the wide moors we went, like an American Indian laden with game, journeying to his wigwam over the wilderness. As we whitened towards the village in the light of morning, the earlier labourers held up their hands in wonder what and who we might be; and Fro, who had missed his master, and was lying awake for him on the mount, came bounding along, nor could refrain the bark of delighted passion as his nose nuzzled in the soft down of the bosom of the creature whom he remembered to have sometimes seen floating too far off in the lake, or far above our reach cleaving the firmament.

CHRISTOPHER
IN HIS SPORTING JACKET
III

CHRISTOPHER
IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

Fytte Third

O Muckle-mou'd Meg! and can it be that thou art numbered among forgotten things—unexistences!

> "*Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course,*
> *With rocks, and stones, and trees!*"

What would we not now give for a sight—a kiss—of thy dear lips! Lips which we remember once to have put to our own, even when thy beloved barrel was double-loaded! Now we sigh to think on what then made us shudder! Oh! that thy butt were but now resting on our shoulder! Alas! for ever discharged! Burst and rent asunder, art thou now lying buried in a peat-moss? Did some vulgar villain of a

village Vulcan convert thee, name and nature, into nails? Some dark-visaged Douglas of a henroost-robbing Egyptian solder thee into a pan? Oh! that our passion could dig down unto thee in the bowels of the earth—and with loud lamenting elegies, and louder hymns of gratulation, restore thee, buttless, lockless, vizyless, burst, rent, torn, and twisted though thou be'st, to the light of day, and of the world-rejoicing Sun! Then would we adorn thee with evergreen wreaths of the laurel and the ivy—and hang thee up, in memory and in monument of all the bright, dim, still, stormy days of our boyhood—when gloom itself was glory—and when—But

"*Be hush'd my dark spirit! for wisdom condemns,*
When the faint and the feeble deplore."

Cassandra—Corinna—Sappho—Lucretia—Cleopatra—Tighe—De Staël—in their beauty or in their genius, are, with millions on millions of the fair-faced or bright-souled, nothing but dust and ashes; and as they are, so shall Baillie, and Grant, and Hemans, and Landon be—and why vainly yearn "with love and longings infinite," to save from doom of perishable nature—of all created things, but one alone—Muckle-mou'd Meg!

After a storm comes a calm; and we hasten to give the sporting world the concluding account of our

education. In the moorland parish—God bless it—in which we had the inestimable advantage of passing our boyhood—there were a good many falcons—of course the kite or glead—the buzzard—the sparrow-hawk—the marsh harrier—that imp the merlin—and, rare bird and beautiful! there, on a cliff which, alas! a crutched man must climb no more, did the Peregrine build her nest. You must not wonder at this, for the parish was an extensive one even for Scotland—half Highland half Lowland—and had not only "muirs and mosses many o," but numerous hills, not a few mountains, some most extraordinary cliffs, considerable store of woods, and one, indeed, that might well be called The Forest.

Lift up thy rock-crowned forehead through thy own sweet stormy skies, Auld Scotland! and as sternly and grimly thou look'st far over the hushed or howling seas, remember thee—till all thy moors and mosses quake at thy heart, as if swallowing up an invading army—a fate that oft befell thy foes of yore—remember thee, in mist-shrouded dream, and cloud-born vision, of the long line of kings, and heroes, and sages, and bards, whose hallowed bones sleep in pine-darkened tombs among the mountain heather, by the side of rivers, and lochs, and arms of ocean—their spirits yet seen in lofty superstition, sailing or sitting on the swift or settled tempest. Lift up thy rock-

crowned forehead, Auld Scotland! and sing aloud to all the nations of the earth, with thy voice of cliffs, and caves, and caverns,

"*Wha daur meddle wi' me?*"

What! some small, puny, piteous windpipes are heard cheeping against thee from the Cockneys—like ragged chickens agape in the pip. How the feeble and fearful creatures would crawl on their hands and knees, faint and giddy, and shrieking out for help to the heather stalks, if forced to face one of thy cliffs, and foot its flinty bosom! How would the depths of their long ears, cotton-stuffed in vain, ache to the spray-thunder of thy cataracts! Sick, sick would be their stomachs, storm-swept in a six-oared cutter into the jaws of Staffa! That sight is sufficient to set the most saturnine on the guffaw—the Barry Cornwall himself, crossing a chasm a hundred yards deep,

"*On the uncertain footing of a spar,*"

on a tree felled where it stood, centuries ago, by steel or storm, into a ledgeless bridge, oft sounding and shaking to the hunter's feet in chase of the red-deer! The Cockneys do not like us Scotchmen—because of our high cheekbones. They are sometimes very high indeed, very coarse, and very ugly, and give a Scotchman a grim and gaunt look, assuredly not to be sneezed at, with any hope of impunity, on a dark

day and in a lonesome place, by the most heroic chief of the most heroic clan in all the level land of Lud, travelling all by himself in a horse and gig, and with a black boy in a cockaded glazed hat, through the Heelands o' Scotland, passing of course, at the very least, for a captain of Hussars! Then Scotchmen canna keep their backs straught, it seems, and are always booin' and booin' afore a great man. Cannot they, indeed? Do they, indeed? Ascend with that Scottish shepherd yon mountain's breast—swim with him that mountain loch—a bottle of Glenlivet, who first stands in shallow water, on the Oak Isle—and whose back will be straughtest, that of the Caledonian or the Cockney? The little Luddite will be puking among the heather, about some five hundred feet above the level of the sea—higher for the first time in his life than St Paul's, and nearer than he ever will again be, either in the spirit or the flesh, to heaven. The little Luddite will be puking in the hitherto unpolluted loch, after some seven strokes or so, with a strong Scottish weed twisted like an eel round its thigh, and shrieking out for the nearest resuscitating machine in a country, where, alas! there is no Humane Society. The back of the shepherd—even in presence of that "great man"—will be as straught as—do not tremble, Cockney—this Crutch. Conspicuous from afar like a cairn, from the inn-door at Arrochar, in an

hour he will be turning up his little finger so—on the Cobler's head; or, in twenty minutes, gliding like a swan, or shooting like a salmon, his back being still straught—leaving Luss, he will be shaking the dew-drops from his brawny body on the silver sand of Inch Morren.

And happy were we, Christopher North, happy were we in the parish in which Fate delivered us up to Nature, that, under her tuition, our destinies might be fulfilled. A parish! Why it was in itself a kingdom—a world. Thirty miles long by twenty at the broadest, and five at the narrowest; and is not that a kingdom—is not that a world worthy of any monarch that ever wore a crown? Was it level? Yes, league-long levels were in it of greensward, hard as the sand of the sea-shore, yet springy and elastic, fit training ground for Childers, or Eclipse, or Hambletonian, or Smolensko, or for a charge of cavalry in some great pitched battle, while artillery might keep playing against artillery from innumerous affronting hills. Was it boggy? Yes, black bogs were there, which extorted a panegyric from the roving Irishman in his richest brogue—bogs in which forests had of old been buried, and armies with all their banners. Was it hilly? Ay, there the white sheep nibbled, and the black cattle grazed; there they baa'd and they lowed upon a thousand hills—a crowd of cones, all

green as emerald. Was it mountainous? Give answer from afar, ye mist-shrouded summits, and ye clouds cloven by the eagle's wing! But whether ye be indeed mountains, or whether ye be clouds, who can tell, bedazzled as are his eyes by that long-lingering sunset, that drenches heaven and earth in one indistinguishable glory, setting the West on fire, as if the final conflagration were begun! Was it woody? Hush, hush, and you will hear a pine-cone drop in the central silence of a forest—a silent and solitary wilderness—in which you may wander a whole day long, unaccompanied but by the cushat, the corby, the falcon, the roe, and they are all shy of human feet, and, like thoughts, pass away in a moment; so if you long for less fleeting farewells from the native dwellers in the wood, lo! the bright brown queen of the butterflies, gay and gaudy in her glancings through the solitude, the dragon-fly whirring bird-like over the pools in the glade; and if your ear desire music, the robin and the wren may haply trill you a few notes among the briery rocks, or the bold blackbird open wide his yellow bill in his holly-tree, and set the squirrels a-leaping all within reach of his ringing roundelay. Any rivers? one—to whom a thousand torrents are tributary—as he himself is tributary to the sea. Any lochs? How many we know not—for we never counted them twice alike—omitting perhaps

some forgotten tarns, or counting twice over some one of our more darling waters, worthy to dash their waves against the sides of ships—alone wanting to the magnificence of those inland seas! Yes—it was as level, as boggy, as hilly, as mountainous, as woody, as lochy, and as rivery a parish, as ever laughed to scorn Colonel Mudge and his Trigonometrical Survey.

Was not that a noble parish for apprenticeship in sports and pastimes of a great master? No need of any teacher. On the wings of joy we were borne over the bosom of nature, and learnt all things worthy and needful to be learned, by instinct first, and afterwards by reason. To look at a wild creature—winged with feathers, or mere feet—and not desire to destroy or capture it—is impossible to passion—to imagination—to fancy. Thus had we longed to feel and handle the glossy plumage of the beaked birds—the wide-winged Birds of Prey—before our finger had ever touched a trigger. Their various flight, in various weather, we had watched and noted with something even of the eye of a naturalist—the wonder of a poet; for among the brood of boys there are hundreds and thousands of poets who never see manhood, —the poetry dying away—the boy growing up into mere prose;—yet to some even of the paragraphs of these Three Fyttes do we appeal, that a few sparks of the sacred light are yet alive within us; and sad

to our old ears would be the sound of "Put out the light, and then—put out the light!" Thus were we impelled, even when a mere child, far away from the manse, for miles, into the moors and woods. Once it was feared that poor wee Kit was lost; for having set off all by himself, at sunrise, to draw a night-line from the distant Black Loch, and look at a trap set for a glead, a mist overtook him on the moor on his homeward way, with an eel as long as himself hanging over his shoulder, and held him prisoner for many hours within its shifting walls, frail indeed, and opposing no resistance to the hand, yet impenetrable to the feet of fear as the stone dungeon's thraldom. If the mist had remained, that would have been nothing; only a still cold wet seat on a stone; but as "a trot becomes a gallop soon, in spite of curb and rein," so a Scotch mist becomes a shower—and a shower a flood—and a flood a storm—and a storm a tempest—and a tempest thunder and lightning—and thunder and lightning heaven-quake and earth-quake —till the heart of poor wee Kit quaked, and almost died within him in the desert. In this age of Confessions, need we be ashamed to own, in the face of the whole world, that we sat us down and cried! The small brown Moorland bird, as dry as a toast, hopped out of his heather-hole, and cheerfully cheeped comfort. With crest just a thought lowered by the rain,

the green-backed, white-breasted peaseweep walked close by us in the mist; and sight of wonder, that made even in that quandary by the quagmire our heart beat with joy—lo! never seen before, and seldom since, three wee peaseweeps, not three days old, little bigger than shrew-mice, all covered with blackish down, interspersed with long white hair, running after their mother! But the large hazel eye of the she peaseweep, restless even in the most utter solitude, soon spied us glowering at her, and her young ones, through our tears; and not for a moment doubting —Heaven forgive her for the shrewd but cruel suspicion!—that we were Lord Eglinton's gamekeeper —with a sudden shrill cry that thrilled to the marrow in our cold backbone—flapped and fluttered herself away into the mist, while the little black bits of down disappeared, like devils, into the moss. The croaking of the frogs grew terrible. And worse and worse, close at hand, seeking his lost cows through the mist, the bellow of the notorious red bull! We began saying our prayers; and just then the sun forced himself out into the open day, and, like the sudden opening of the shutters of a room, the whole world was filled with light. The frogs seemed to sink among the pow-heads—as for the red bull who had tossed the tinker, he was cantering away, with his tail towards us, to a lot of cows on the hill; and hark

—a long, a loud, an oft-repeated halloo! Rab Roger, honest fellow, and Leezy Muir, honest lass, from the manse, in search of our dead body! Rab pulls our ears lightly, and Leezy kisses us from the one to the other—wrings the rain out of our long yellow hair —(a pretty contrast to the small grey sprig now on the crown of our pericranium, and the thin tail acock behind)—and by and by stepping into Hazel-Dean-head for a drap and a "chitterin' piece," by the time we reach the manse we are as dry as a whistle—take our scold and our pawmies from the minister—and, by way of punishment and penance, after a little hot whisky toddy, with brown sugar and a bit of bun, are bundled off to bed in the daytime!

Thus we grew up a Fowler, ere a loaded gun was in our hand—and often guided the city-fowler to the haunts of the curlew, the plover, the moorfowl, and the falcon. The falcon! yes—in the higher region of clouds and cliffs. For now we had shot up into a stripling—and how fast had we so shot up you may know, by taking notice of the schoolboy on the play-green, and two years afterwards discovering, perhaps, that he is that fine tall ensign carrying the colours among the light-bobs of the regiment, to the sound of clarion and flute, cymbal and great drum, marching into the city a thousand strong.

We used in early boyhood, deceived by some un-

certainty in size, not to distinguish between a kite and a buzzard, which was very stupid, and unlike us —more like Poietes in Salmonia. The flight of the buzzard, as may be seen in Selby, is slow—and except during the season of incubation, when it often soars to a considerable height, it seldom remains long on the wing. It is indeed a heavy, inactive bird, both in disposition and appearance, and is generally seen perched upon some old and decayed tree, such being its favourite haunt. Him we soon thought little or nothing about—and the last one we shot, it was, we remember, just as he was coming out of the deserted nest of a crow, which he had taken possession of out of pure laziness; and we killed him for not building a house of his own in a country where there was no want of sticks. But the kite or glead, as the same distinguished ornithologist rightly says, is proverbial for the ease and gracefulness of its flight, which generally consists of large and sweeping circles, performed with a motionless wing, or at least with a slight and almost imperceptible stroke of its pinions, and at very distant intervals. In this manner, and directing its course by its tail, which acts as a rudder, whose slightest motion produces effect, it frequently soars to such a height as to become almost invisible to the human eye. Him we loved to slay, as a bird worthy of our barrel. Him and her have we watched

for days, life a lynx, till we were led, almost as if by an instinct, to their nest in the heart of the forest—a nest lined with wool, hair, and other soft materials, in the fork of some large tree. They will not, of course, utterly forsake their nest, when they have young, fire at them as you will, though they become more wary, and seem as if they heard a leaf fall, so suddenly will they start and soar to heaven. We remember, from an ambuscade in a briery dell in the forest, shooting one flying overhead to its nest; and, on going up to him as he lay on his back, with clenched talons and fierce eyes, absolutely shrieking and yelling with fear, and rage, and pain, we intended to spare his life, and only take him prisoner, when we beheld beside him on the sod, a chicken from the brood of famous ginger piles, then, all but his small self, following the feet of their clucking mother at the manse! With visage all inflamed, we gave him the butt on his double organ of destructiveness, then only known to us by the popular name of "back o' the head," exclaiming

"*Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas*
Immolat"——

Quivered every feather, from beak to tail and talon, in his last convulsion,

"*Vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras!*"

In the season of love what combats have we been witness to—Umpire—between birds of prey! The Female Falcon, she sat aloof like a sultana, in her soft, sleek, glossy plumes, the iris in her eye of wilder, more piercing, fiery, cruel, fascinating, and maddening lustre, than ever lit the face of the haughtiest human queen, adored by princes on her throne of diamonds. And now her whole plumage shivers—and is ruffled—for her own Gentle Peregrine appears, and they two will enjoy their dalliance on the edge of the cliff-chasm—and the Bride shall become a wife in that stormy sunshine on the loftiest precipice of all these our Alps. But a sudden sugh sweeps down from heaven, and a rival Hawk comes rushing in his rage from his widowed eyry, and will win and wear this his second selected bride—for her sake, tearing, or to be torn, to pieces. Both struck down from heaven, fall a hundred fathom to the heather, talon-locked, in the mutual gripe of death. Fair play, gentlemen, and attend to the Umpire. It is, we understand, to be an up-and-down fight. Allow us to disentangle you—and without giving advantage to either—elbow-room to both. Neither of you ever saw a human face so near before—nor ever were captive in a human hand. Both fasten their momentarily frightened eyes on us, and, holding back their heads, emit a wild ringing cry. But now they catch sight of each other, and in

an instant are one bunch of torn, bloody plumes. Perhaps their wings are broken, and they can soar no more—so up we fling them both into the air—and wheeling each within a short circle, clash again go both birds together, and the talons keep tearing throats till they die. Let them die, then, for both are for ever disabled to enjoy their lady-love. She, like some peerless flower in the days of chivalry at a fatal tournament, seeing her rival lovers dying for her sake, nor ever to wear her glove or scarf in the front of battle, rising to leave her canopy in tears of grief and pride—even like such Angelica, the falcon unfolds her wings, and flies slowly away from her dying ravishers, to bewail her virginity on the mountains. "O Frailty! thy name is woman!" A third Lover is already on the wing, more fortunate than his preceding peers—and Angelica is won, woo'd, and sitting, about to lay an egg in an old eyry, soon repaired and furbished up for the honey-week, with a number of small birds lying on the edge of the hymeneal couch, with which, when wearied with love, and yawp with hunger, Angelica may cram her maw till she be ready to burst, by her bridegroom's breast.

Forgotten all human dwellings, and all the thoughts and feelings that abide by firesides, and doorways, and rooms, and roofs—delightful was it, during the long long midsummer holyday, to lie all alone, on the

greensward of some moor-surrounded mount, not far from the foot of some range of cliffs, and with our face up to the sky, wait, unwearying, till a speck was seen to cross the blue cloudless lift, and steadying itself after a minute's quivering into motionless rest, as if hung suspended there by the counteracting attraction of heaven and earth, known to be a Falcon! Balanced far above its prey, and, soon as the right moment came, ready to pounce down, and fly away with the treasure in its talons to its crying eyry! If no such speck were for hours visible in the ether, doubtless dream upon dream, rising unbidden, and all of their own wild accord, congenial with the wilderness, did, like phantasmagoria, pass to and fro, backwards and forwards, along the darkened curtain of our imagination, all the lights of reason being extinguished or removed! In that trance, not unheard, although scarcely noticed, was the cry of the curlew, the murmur of the little moorland burn, or the din, almost like dashing, of the far-off loch. 'T was thus that the senses, in their most languid state, ministered to the fancy, and fed her for a future day, when all the imagery then received so imperfectly, and in broken fragments, into her mysterious keeping, was to arise in orderly array, and to form a world more lovely and more romantic even than the reality, which then lay hushed or whispering, glittering or gloomy, in the

outward air. For the senses hear and see all things in their seeming slumbers, from all the impulses that come to them in solitude gaining more, far more, than they have lost! When we are awake, or half awake, or almost sunk into a sleep, they are ceaselessly gathering materials for the thinking and feeling soul—and it is hers, in a deep delight formed of memory and imagination, to put them together by a divine plastic power, in which she is almost, as it were, a very creator, till she exult to look on beauty and on grandeur such as this earth and these heavens never saw, products of her own immortal and immaterial energies, and BEING once, to BE for ever, when the universe, with all its suns and systems, is no more!

But oftener we and our shadows glided along the gloom at the foot of the cliffs, ear-led by the incessant cry of the young hawks in their nest, ever hungry except when asleep. Left to themselves, when the old birds are hunting, an hour's want of food is felt to be famine, and you hear the cry of the callow creatures, angry with one another, and it may be, fighting with soft beak and pointless claws, till a living lump of down tumbles over the rock-ledge, soon to be picked to the bone by insects, who likewise all live upon prey; for example, Ants of carrion. Get you behind that briery bield, that wild-rose hanging rock, far and wide scenting the wilderness with a faint perfume;

or into that cell, almost a parlour, with a Gothic roof formed by large stones leaning one against the other and so arrested, as they tumbled from the frost-riven breast of the precipice. Wait there, though it should be for hours—but it will not be for hours; for both the old hawks are circling the sky, one over the marsh and one over the wood. She comes—she comes—the female Sparrowhawk, twice the size of her mate; and while he is plain in his dress, as a cunning and cruel Quaker, she is gay and gaudy as a Demirep dressed for the pit of the Opera—deep and broad her bosom, with an air of luxury in her eyes that glitter like a serpent's. But now she is a mother, and plays a mother's part—greedier, even than for herself, for her greedy young. The lightning flashes from the cave-mouth, and she comes tumbling, and dashing, and rattling through the dwarf bushes on the cliff-face, perpendicular, and plumb-down, within three yards of her murderer. Her husband will not visit his nest this day—no—nor all night long; for a father's is not as a mother's love. Your only chance of killing him, too, is to take a lynx-eyed circuit round about all the moors within half a league; and possibly you may see him sitting on some cairn, or stone, or tree-stump, afraid to fly either hither or thither, perplexed by the sudden death he saw appearing among the unaccountable smoke, scenting it

yet with his fine nostrils, so as to be unwary of your approach. Hazard a long shot—for you are right behind him—and a slug may hit him on the head, and, following the feathers, split his skull-cap and scatter his brains. 'T is done—and the eyry is orphan'd. Let the small brown moorland birds twitter Io Pean, as they hang balanced on the bulrushes—let the stone-chat glance less fearfully within shelter of the old grey cairn—let the cushat coo his joyous gratitude in the wood—and the lark soar up to heaven, afraid no more of a demon descending from the cloud. As for the imps in the eyry, let them die of rage and hunger—for there must always be pain in the world; and 't is well when its endurance by the savage is the cause of pleasure to the sweet—when the gore-yearning cry of the cruel is drowned in the song of the kind at feed or play—and the tribes of the peace-loving rejoice in the despair and death of the robbers and shedders of blood!

Not one fowler of fifty thousand has in all his days shot an Eagle. That royal race seems nearly extinct in Scotland. Gaze as you will over the wide circumference of a Highland heaven, calm as the bride's dream of love, or disturbed as the shipwrecked sailor's vision of a storm, and all spring and summer long you may not chance to see the shadow of an Eagle in the sun. The old kings of the air are sometimes yet seen by

the shepherds on cliff or beneath cloud; but their offspring are rarely allowed to get full-fledged in spite of the rifle always lying loaded in the shieling. But in the days of our boyhood there were many glorious things on earth and air that now no more seem to exist, and among these were the Eagles. One pair had from time immemorial built on the Echo-cliff, and you could see with a telescope the eyry, with the rim of its circumference, six feet in diameter, strewn with partridges, moorfowl, and leverets—their feathers and their skeletons. But the Echo-cliff was inaccessible.

"*Hither the rainbow comes, the cloud,*
And mists that spread the flying shroud,
And sunbeams, and the flying blast,
That if it could, would hurry past,
But that enormous barrier binds it fast."

No human eye ever saw the birds within a thousand feet of the lower earth; yet how often must they have stooped down on lamb and leveret, and struck the cushat in her very yew-tree in the centre of the wood! Perhaps they preyed at midnight, by the light of the waning moon—at mid-day, in the night of sun-hiding tempests—or afar off, in even more solitary wilds, carried thither on the whirlwind of their own wings, they swept off their prey from uninhabited isles,

"*Placed far amid the melancholy main,*"

or vast inland glens, where not a summer shieling smiles beneath the region of eternal snows. But eagles are subject to diseases in flesh, and bone, and blood, just like the veriest poultry that die of croup and consumption on the dunghill before the byre-door. Sickness blinds the eye that God framed to pierce the seas, and weakens the wing that dallies with the tempest. Then the eagle feels how vain is the doctrine of the divine right of kings. He is hawked at by the mousing owl, whose instinct instructs him that these talons have lost their grasp, and these pinions their death-blow. The eagle lies for weeks famished in his eyry, and hunger-driven over the ledge, leaves it to ascend no more. He is dethroned, and wasted to mere bones—a bunch of feathers—his flight is now slower than that of the buzzard—he floats himself along now with difficulty from knoll to knoll, pursued by the shrieking magpies, buffeted by the corby, and lying on his back, like a recreant, before the beak of the raven, who, a month ago, was terrified to hop round the carcass till the king of the air was satiated, and gave his permission to croaking Sooty to dig into the bowels he himself had scorned. Yet he is a noble aim to the fowler still; you break a wing and a leg, but fear to touch him with your hand; Fro feels the iron-clutch of his talons constricted in the death-pang; and holding him up, you wonder that such an

anatomy—for his weight is not more than three pounds—could drive his claws through that shaggy hide till blood sprung to the blow—inextricable but to yells of pain, and leaving gashes hard to heal, for virulent is the poison of rage in a dying bird of prey.

Sublime solitude of our boyhood! where each stone in the desert was sublime, unassociated though it was with dreams of memory, in its own simple native power over the human heart! Each sudden breath of wind passed by us like the voice of a spirit. There were strange meanings in the clouds—often so like human forms and faces threatening us off, or beckoning us on, with long black arms, back into the long-withdrawing wilderness of heaven. We wished then, with quaking bosoms, that we had not been all alone in the desert—that there had been another heart, whose beatings might have kept time with our own, that we might have gathered courage in the silent and sullen gloom from the light in a brother's eye —the smile on a brother's countenance. And often had we such a Friend in these our far-off wanderings over moors and mountains, by the edge of lochs, and through the umbrage of the old pine-woods. A Friend from whom "we had received his heart, and given him back our own,"—such a friendship as the most fortunate and the most happy—and at that time we were both—are sometimes permitted by Providence,

with all the passionate devotion of young and untamed imagination, to enjoy, during a bright dreamy world of which that friendship is as the Polar star. Emilius Godfrey! for ever holy be the name! a boy when we were but a child—when we were but a youth, a man. We felt stronger in the shadow of his arm—happier, bolder, better in the light of his countenance. He was the protector—the guardian of our moral being. In our pastimes we bounded with wilder glee—at our studies we sat with intenser earnestness, by his side. He it was that taught us how to feel all those glorious sunsets, and imbued our young spirit with the love and worship of nature. He it was that taught us to feel that our evening prayer was no idle ceremony to be hastily gone through—that we might lay down our head on the pillow, then soon smoothed in sleep, but a command of God, which a response from nature summoned the humble heart to obey. He it was who for ever had at command wit for the sportive, wisdom for the serious hour. Fun and frolic flowed in the merry music of his lips—they lightened from the gay glancing of his eyes—and then, all at once, when the one changed its measures, and the other gathered, as it were, a mist or a cloud, an answering sympathy chained our own tongue, and darkened our own countenance, in intercommunion of spirit felt to be indeed divine! It

seemed as if we knew but the words of language—that he was a scholar who saw into their very essence. The books we read together were, every page, and every sentence of every page, all covered over with light. Where his eye fell not as we read, all was dim or dark, unintelligible or with imperfect meanings. Whether we perused with him a volume writ by a nature like our own, or the volume of the earth and the sky, or the volume revealed from Heaven, next day we always knew and felt that something had been added to our being. Thus imperceptibly we grew up in our intellectual stature, breathing a purer moral and religious air, with all our finer affections towards other human beings, all our kindred and our kind, touched with a dearer domestic tenderness, or with a sweet benevolence that seemed to our ardent fancy to embrace the dwellers in the uttermost regions of the earth. No secret of pleasure or pain—of joy or grief—of fear or hope—had our heart to withhold or conceal from Emilius Godfrey. He saw it as it beat within our bosom, with all its imperfections—may we venture to say, with all its virtues. A repented folly—a confessed fault—a sin for which we were truly contrite—a vice flung from us with loathing and with shame—in such moods as these, happier were we to see his serious and his solemn smile, than when in mirth and merriment we sat by

his side in the social hour on a knoll in the open sunshine, and the whole school were in ecstasies to hear tales and stories from his genius, even like a flock of birds chirping in their joy all newly-alighted in a vernal land. In spite of that difference in our years—or oh! say rather because that very difference did touch the one heart with tenderness and the other with reverence, how often did we two wander, like elder and younger brother, in the sunlight and the moonlight solitudes! Woods—into whose inmost recesses we should have quaked alone to penetrate, in his company were glad as gardens, through their most awful umbrage; and there was beauty in the shadows of the old oaks. Cataracts—in whose lonesome thunder, as it pealed into those pitchy pools, we durst not by ourselves have faced the spray—in his presence, dinn'd with a merry music in the desert, and cheerful was the thin mist they cast sparkling up into the air. Too severe for our uncompanioned spirit, then easily overcome with awe, was the solitude of those remote inland lochs. But as we walked with him along the winding shores, how passing sweet the calm of both blue depths—how magnificent the white-crested waves tumbling beneath the black thunder-cloud! More beautiful, because our eyes gazed on it along with his, at the beginning or the ending of some sudden storm, the Apparition of the Rainbow!

Grander in its wildness, that seemed to sweep at once all the swinging and stooping woods, to our ear, because his too listened, the concerto by winds and waves played at midnight, when not one star was in the sky. With him we first followed the Falcon in her flight—he showed us on the Echo-cliff the Eagle's eyry. To the thicket he led us where lay couched the lovely-spotted Doe, or showed us the mild-eyed creature browsing on the glade with her two fawns at her side. But for him we should not then have seen the antlers of the red-deer, for the Forest was indeed a most savage place, and haunted —such was the superstition at which they who scorned it trembled—haunted by the ghost of a huntsman whom a jealous rival had murdered as he stooped, after the chase, at a little mountain well that ever since oozed out blood. What converse passed between us two in all those still shadowy solitudes! Into what depths of human nature did he teach our wondering eyes to look down! Oh! what was to become of us, we sometimes thought in sadness that all at once made our spirits sink—like a lark falling suddenly to earth, struck by the fear of some unwonted shadow from above—what was to become of us when the mandate should arrive for him to leave the Manse for ever, and sail away in a ship to India never more to return! Ever as that dreaded day drew nearer, more

frequent was the haze in our eyes; and in our blindness, we knew not that such tears ought to have been far more rueful still, for that he then lay under orders for a longer and more lamentable voyage—a voyage over a narrow streight to the Eternal shore. All—all at once he drooped; on one fatal morning the dread decay began—with no forewarning, the springs on which his being had so lightly—so proudly—so grandly moved—gave way. Between one Sabbath and another his bright eyes darkened—and while all the people were assembled at the sacrament, the soul of Emilius Godfrey soared up to Heaven. It was indeed a dreadful death, serene and sainted though it were—and not a hall—not a house—not a hut—not a shieling within all the circle of those wide mountains, that did not on that night mourn as if it had lost a son. All the vast parish attended his funeral—Lowlanders and Highlanders in their own garb of grief. And have time and tempest now blackened the white marble of that monument—is that inscription now hard to be read—the name of Emilius Godfrey in green obliteration—nor haply one surviving who ever saw the light of the countenance of him there interred! Forgotten as if he had never been! for few were that glorious orphan's kindred—and they lived in a foreign land—forgotten but by one heart, faithful through all the chances and changes of this rest-

less world! And therein enshrined among all its holiest remembrances, shall be the image of Emilius Godfrey, till it too, like his, shall be but dust and ashes!

Oh! blame not boys for so soon forgetting one another—in absence or in death. Yet forgetting is not just the very word; call it rather a reconcilement to doom and destiny—in thus obeying a benign law of nature that soon streams sunshine over the shadows of the grave. Not otherwise could all the ongoings of this world be continued. The nascent spirit outgrows much in which it once found all delight; and thoughts delightful still, thoughts of the faces and the voices of the dead, perish not, lying sometimes in slumber—sometimes in sleep. It belongs not to the blessed season and genius of youth, to hug to its heart useless and unavailing griefs. Images of the well-beloved, when they themselves are in the mould, come and go, no unfrequent visitants, through the meditative hush of solitude. But our main business—our prime joys and our prime sorrows—ought to be —must be with the living. Duty demands it; and Love, who would pine to death over the bones of the dead, soon fastens upon other objects with eyes and voices to smile and whisper and answer to all his vows. So was it with us. Ere the midsummer sun had withered the flowers that spring had sprinkled over

our Godfrey's grave, youth vindicated its own right to happiness; and we felt that we did wrong to visit too often that corner in the kirkyard. No fears had we of any too oblivious tendencies; in our dreams we saw him—most often all alive as ever—sometimes a phantom away from that grave! If the morning light was frequently hard to be endured, bursting suddenly upon us along with the feeling that he was dead, it more frequently cheered and gladdened us with resignation, and sent us forth a fit playmate to the dawn that rang with all sounds of joy. Again we found ourselves angling down the river, or along the loch—once more following the flight of the Falcon along the woods—eying the Eagle on the Echo-cliff. Days passed by, without so much as one thought of Emilius Godfrey—pursuing our pastime with all our passion, reading our books intently—just as if he had never been! But often and often, too, we thought we saw his figure coming down the hill straight towards us—his very figure—we could not be deceived—but the love-raised ghost disappeared on a sudden—the grief-woven spectre melted into the mist. The strength, that formerly had come from his counsels, now began to grow up of itself within our own unassisted being. The world of nature became more our own, moulded and modified by all our own feelings and fancies; and with a bolder and more original eye

we saw the smoke from the sprinkled cottages, and read the faces of the mountaineers on their way to their work, or coming and going to the house of God.

Then this was to be our last year in the parish—now dear to us as our birth-place; nay, itself our very birth-place—for in it from the darkness of infancy had our soul been born. Once gone and away from the region of cloud and mountain, we felt that most probably never more should we return. For others, who thought they knew us better than we did ourselves, had chalked out a future life for young Christopher North—a life that was sure to lead to honour, and riches, and a splendid name. Therefore we determined with a strong, resolute, insatiate spirit of passion, to make the most—the best—of the few months that remained to us, of that our wild, free, and romantic existence, as yet untrammelled by those inexorable laws, which, once launched into the world, all alike—young and old—must obey. Our books were flung aside—nor did our old master and minister frown—for he grudged not to the boy he loved the remnant of the dream about to be rolled away like the dawn's rosy clouds. We demanded with our eye—not with our voice—one long holyday, throughout that our last autumn, on to the pale farewell blossoms of the Christmas rose. With our rod we went earlier to the loch or river; but we had not known thoroughly our

own soul—for now we angled less passionately—less perseveringly than was our wont of yore—sitting in a pensive—a melancholy—a miserable dream, by the dashing waterfall—or the murmuring wave. With our gun we plunged earlier in the morning into the forest, and we returned later at eve—but less earnest—less eager were we to hear the cushat's moan from his yew-tree—to see the hawk's shadow on the glade, as he hung aloft on the sky. A thousand dead thoughts came to life again in the gloom of the woods—and we sometimes did wring our hands in an agony of grief, to know that our eyes should not behold the birch-tree brightening there with another spring.

Then every visit we paid to cottage or to shieling was felt to be a farewell; there was something mournful in the smiles on the sweet faces of the ruddy rustics, with their silken snoods, to whom we used to whisper harmless love-meanings, in which there was no evil guile; we regarded the solemn toil-and-care-worn countenances of the old with a profounder emotion than had ever touched our hearts in the hour of our more thoughtless joy; and the whole life of those dwellers among the woods, and the moors, and the mountains, seemed to us far more affecting now that we saw deeper into it, in the light of a melancholy sprung from the conviction that the time was close at

hand when we should mingle with it no more. The thoughts that possessed our most secret bosom failed not by the least observant to be discovered in our open eyes. They who had liked us before, now loved us; our faults, our follies, the insolencies of our reckless boyhood, were all forgotten; whatever had been our sins, pride towards the poor was never among the number; we had shunned not stooping our head beneath the humblest lintel; our mite had been given to the widow who had lost her own; quarrelsome with the young we might sometimes have been, for boy-blood is soon heated, and boils before a defying eye; but in one thing at least we were Spartans, we revered the head of old age.

And many at last were the kind—some the sad farewells, erelong whispered by us at gloaming among the glens. Let them rest for ever silent amidst that music in the memory which is felt, not heard—its blessing mute though breathing, like an inarticulate prayer! But to Thee—O palest Phantom—clothed in white raiment, not like unto a ghost risen with its grave-clothes to appal, but like a seraph descending from the skies to bless—unto Thee will we dare to speak, as through the mist of years back comes thy yet unfaded beauty, charming us, while we cannot choose but weep, with the selfsame vision that often glided before us long ago in the wilderness, and at

the sound of our voice would pause for a little while, and then pass by, like a white bird from the sea, floating unscared close by the shepherd's head, or alighting to trim its plumes on a knoll far up an inland glen! Death seems not to have touched that face, pale though it be—lifelike is the waving of those gentle hands—and the soft, sweet, low music which now we hear, steals not sure from lips hushed by the burial mould! Restored by the power of love, she stands before us as she stood of yore. Not one of all the hairs of her golden head was singed by the lightning that shivered the tree under which the child had run for shelter from the flashing sky. But in a moment the blue light in her dewy eyes was dimmed—and never again did she behold either flower or star. Yet all the images of all the things she had loved remained in her memory, clear and distinct as the things themselves before unextinguished eyes—and ere three summers had flown over her head, which, like the blossom of some fair perennial flower, in heaven's gracious dew and sunshine each season lifted its loveliness higher and higher in the light—she could trip her singing way through the wide wilderness, all by her joyful self, led, as all believed, nor erred they in so believing, by an angel's hand! When the primroses peeped through the reviving grass upon the vernal braes, they seemed to give themselves into

her fingers; and 't was thought they hung longer unfaded round her neck or forehead than if they had been left to drink the dew on their native bed. The linnets ceased not their lays, though her garment touched the broom-stalk on which they sang. The cushat, as she thrid her way through the wood, continued to croon in her darksome tree—and the lark, although just dropped from the cloud, was cheered by her presence into a new passion of song, and mounted over her head, as if it were his first matin hymn. All the creatures of the earth and air manifestly loved the Wanderer of the Wilderness—and as for human beings, she was named, in their pity, their wonder, and their delight, the Blind Beauty of the Moor!

She was an only child, and her mother had died in giving her birth. And now her father, stricken by one of the many cruel diseases that shorten the lives of shepherds on the hills, was bed-ridden—and he was poor. Of all words ever syllabled by human lips, the most blessed is—Charity. No manna now in the wilderness is rained from heaven—for the mouths of the hungry need it not in this our Christian land. A few goats feeding among the rocks gave them milk, and there was bread for them in each neighbour's house—neighbour though miles afar—as the sacred duty came round—and the unrepining poor sent the grateful child away with their prayers.

One evening, returning to the hut with her usual song, she danced up to her father's face on his rushy bed, and it was cold in death. If she shrieked—if she fainted—there was but one Ear that heard, one Eye that saw her in her swoon. Not now floating light like a small moving cloud unwilling to leave the flowery braes, though it be to melt in heaven, but driven along like a shroud of flying mist before the tempest, she came upon us in the midst of that dreary moss; and at the sound of our voice, fell down with clasped hands at our feet—"My father's dead!" Had the hut put already on the strange, dim, desolate look of mortality? For people came walking fast down the braes, and in a little while there was a group round us, and we bore her back again to her dwelling in our arms. As for us, we had been on our way to bid the fair creature and her father farewell. How could she have lived—an utter orphan—in such a world! The holy power that is in Innocence would for ever have remained with her; but Innocence longs to be away, when her sister Joy has departed; and 't is sorrowful to see the one on earth, when the other has gone to Heaven! This sorrow none of us had long to see; for though a flower, when withered at the root, and doomed ere eve to perish, may yet look to the careless eye the same as when it blossomed in its pride—yet its leaves, still green, are not as once they were—its

bloom, though fair, is faded—and at set of sun, the dews shall find it in decay, and fall unfelt on its petals. Ere Sabbath came, the orphan child was dead. Methinks we see now her little funeral. Her birth had been the humblest of the humble; and though all in life had loved her, it was thought best that none should be asked to the funeral of her and her father, but two or three friends; the old clergyman himself walked at the head of the father's coffin—we at the head of the daughter's—for this was granted unto our exceeding love;—and thus passed away for ever the Blind Beauty of the Moor!

Yet sometimes to a more desperate passion than had ever before driven us over the wilds, did we deliver up ourselves entire, and pursue our pastime like one doomed to be a wild huntsman under some spell of magic. Let us, ere we go away from these high haunts and be no more seen—let us away far up the Great Glen, beyond the Echo-cliff, and with our rifle—'t was once the rifle of Emilius Godfrey—let us stalk the red-deer. In that chase or forest the antlers lay not thick, as now they lie on the Athole Braes; they were still a rare sight—and often and often had Godfrey and we gone up and down the Glen, without a single glimpse of buck or doe rising up from among the heather. But as the true angler will try every cast on the river, miles up and down, if he has reason to

McLELLAN

know that but one single fish has run up from the sea —so we, a true hunter, neither grudged nor wearied to stand for hours, still as the heron by the stream, hardly in hope, but satisfied with the possibility, that a deer might pass by us in the desert. Steadiest and strongest is self-fed passion springing in spite of circumstance. When blows the warm showery south-west wind, the trouts turn up their yellow sides at every dropping of the fly on the curling water—and the angler is soon sated with the perpetual play. But once—twice—thrice—during a long blustering day —the sullen plunge of a salmon is sufficient for that day's joy. Still, therefore, still as a cairn that stands for ever on the hill, or rather as the shadow on a dial, that though it moves is never seen to move, day after day were we on our station in the Great Glen. A loud, wild, wrathful, and savage cry from some huge animal made our heart leap to our mouth, and bathed our forehead in sweat. We looked up—and a red-deer —a stag of ten—the king of the forest—stood with all his antlers, snuffing the wind, but yet blind to our figure overshadowed by a rock. The rifle-ball pierced his heart—and leaping up far higher than our head, he tumbled in terrific death, and lay stone-still before our starting eyes amid the rustling of the strong-bented heather! There we stood surveying him for a long triumphing hour. Ghastly were his glazed eyes—

and ghastlier his long bloody tongue, bitten through at the very root in agony. The branches of his antlers pierced the sward like swords. His bulk seemed mightier in death even than when it was crowned with that kingly head, snuffing the north-wind. In other two hours we were down at Moor-edge and up again, with an eager train, to the head of the Great Glen, coming and going a distance of a dozen long miles. A hay-waggon forced its way through the bogs and over the braes—and on our return into the inhabited country, we were met by shoals of peasants, men, women, and children, huzzaing over the Prey; for not for many years—never since the funeral of the old lord—had the antlers of a red-deer been seen by them trailing along the heather.

Fifty years and more—and oh! my weary soul! half a century took a long long time to die away, in gloom and in glory, in pain and pleasure, in storms through which were afraid to fly even the spirit's most eagle-winged raptures, in calms that rocked all her feelings like azure-plumed halcyons to rest—though now to look back upon it, what seems it all but a transitory dream of toil and trouble, of which the smiles, the sighs, the tears, the groans, were all alike vain as the forgotten sunbeams and the clouds! Fifty years and more are gone—and this is the Twelfth of August, Eighteen hundred and twenty-eight; and all the

Highland mountains have since dawn been astir, and thundering to the impetuous sportsmen's joys! Our spirit burns within us, but our limbs are palsied, and our feet must brush the heather no more. Lo! how beautifully these fast-travelling pointers do their work on that black mountain's breast! intersecting it into parallelograms, and squares, and circles, and now all astoop on a sudden, as if frozen to death! Higher up among the rocks, and cliffs, and stones, we see a stripling, whose ambition it is to strike the sky with his forehead, and wet his hair in the misty cloud, pursuing the ptarmigan now in their variegated summer-dress, seen even among the unmelted snows. The scene shifts —and high up on the heath above the Linn of Dee, in the Forest of Braemar, the Thane—God bless him —has stalked the red-deer to his lair, and now lays his unerring rifle at rest on the stump of the Witch's Oak. Never shall Eld deaden our sympathies with the pastimes of our fellow men any more than with their highest raptures, their profoundest griefs. Blessings on the head of every true sportsman on flood, or field, or fell; nor shall we take it at all amiss should any one of them, in return for the pleasure he may have enjoyed from these our Fyttes, perused in smoky cabin during a rainy day, to the peat-reek flavour of the glorious Glenlivet, send us, by the Inverness coach, Aberdeen steam-packet, or any other rapid

conveyance, a basket of game, red, black, or brown, or peradventure a haunch of the red-deer.

Reader! be thou a male, bold as the Tercel Gentle —or a female, fair as the Falcon—a male, stern as an old Stag—or a female, soft as a young Doe—we entreat thee to think kindly of Us and of our Article —and to look in love or in friendship on Christopher in his Sporting Jacket, now come to the close of his Three Fyttes, into which he had fallen—out of one into another—and from which he has now been revived by the application of a little salt to his mouth, and then a caulker. Nor think that, rambling as we have been, somewhat after the style of thinking common in sleep, there has been no method in our madness, no *lucidus ordo* in our dream. All the pages are instinct with one spirit—our thoughts and our feelings have all followed one another, according to the most approved principles of association—and a fine proportion has been unconsciously preserved. The article may be likened to some noble tree, which—although here and there a branch have somewhat overgrown its brother above or below it, an arm stretched itself out into further gloom on this side than on that, so that there are irregularities in the umbrage—is still disfigured not by those sports and freaks of nature working on a great scale, and stands, magnificent object! equal to an old castle, on the cliff

above the cataract. Wo and shame to the sacrilegious hand that would lop away one budding bough! Undisturbed let the tame and wild creatures of the region, in storm or sunshine, find shelter or shade under the calm circumference of its green old age.

THE END

Date Due

LIBRARY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE
799.2 W694c
Wilson, John/Christopher in his sporting
AVLL
3 3768 00140 7827

97991

799.2
W694c

CHRISTOPHER IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

CHRISTOPHER NORTH